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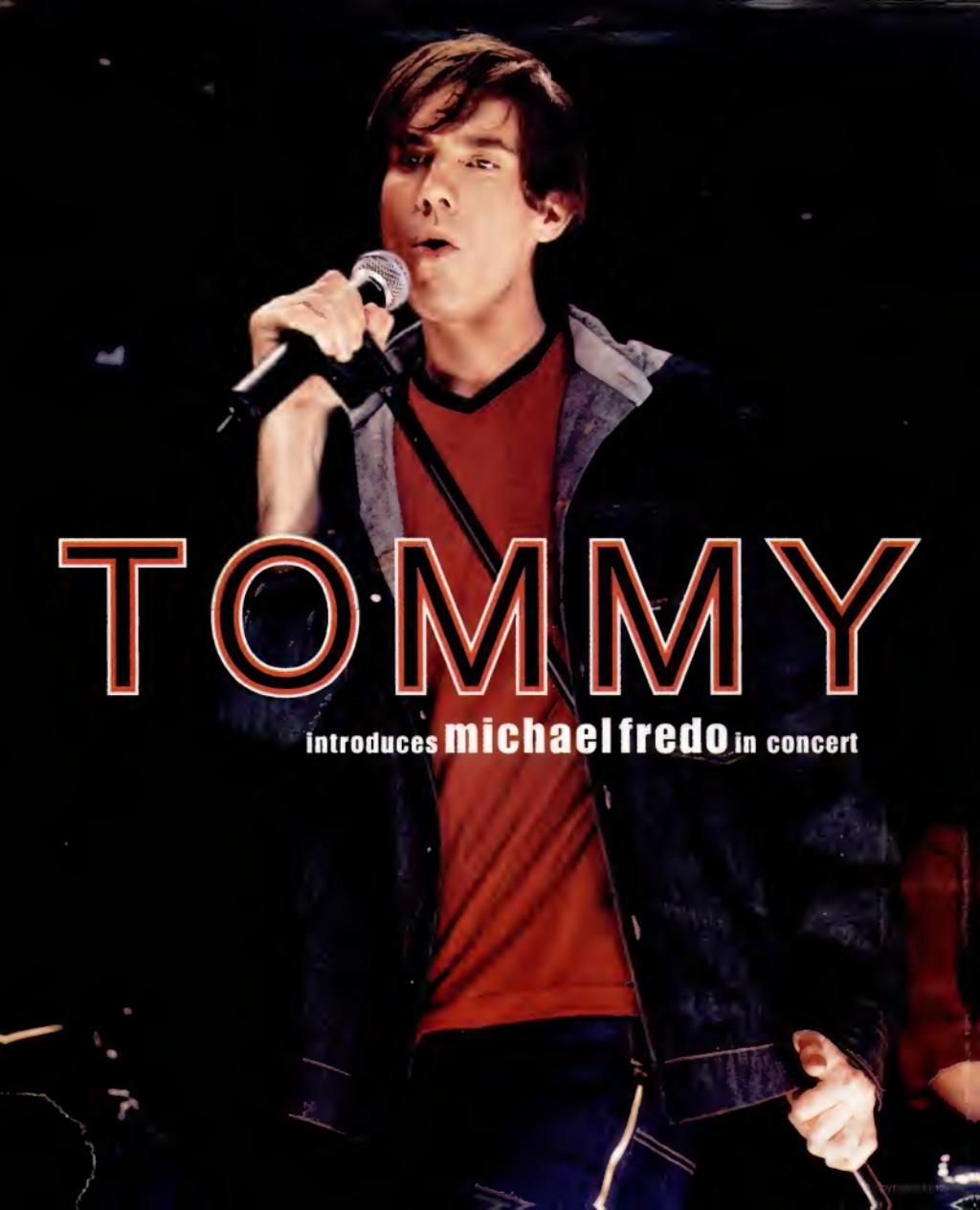
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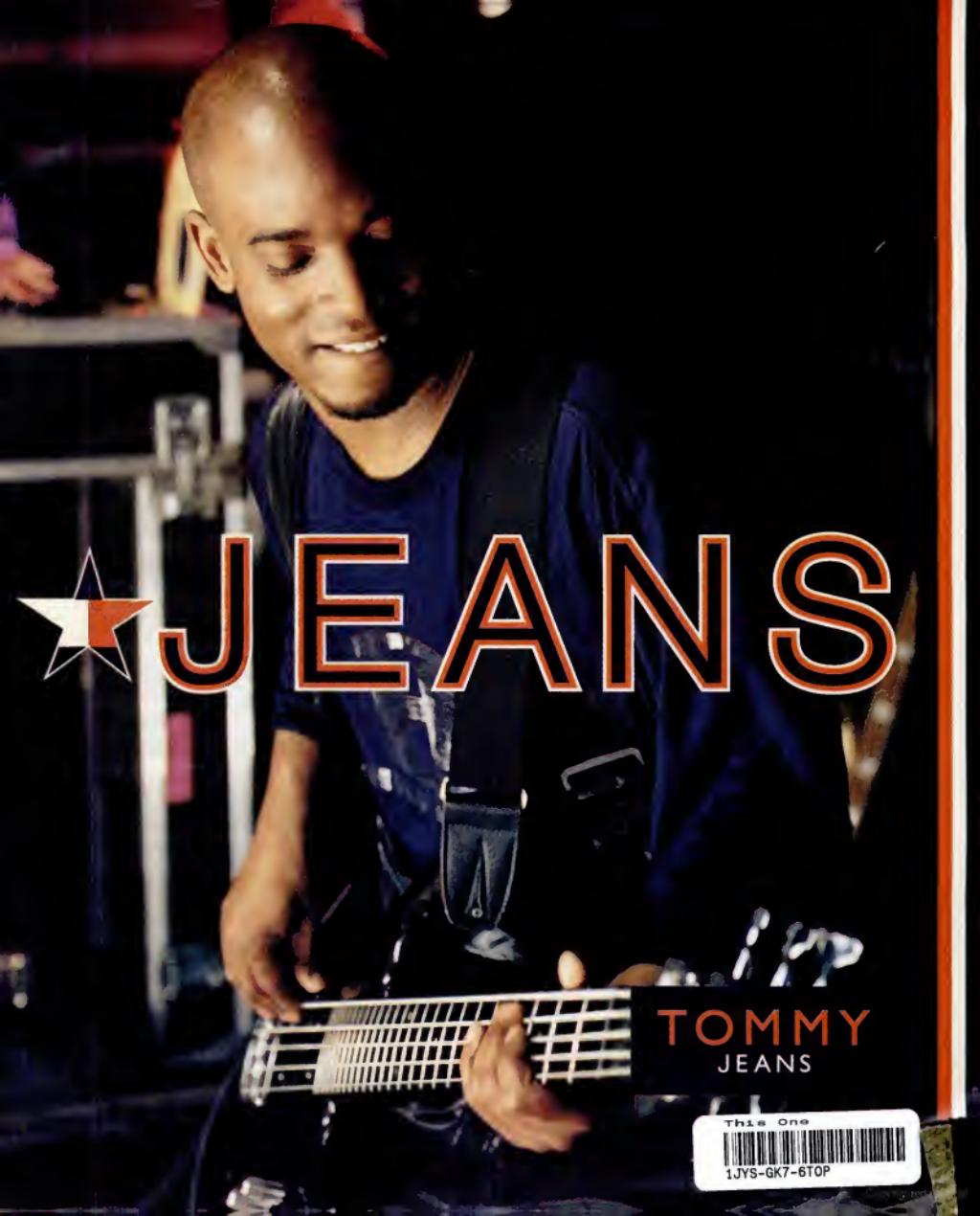


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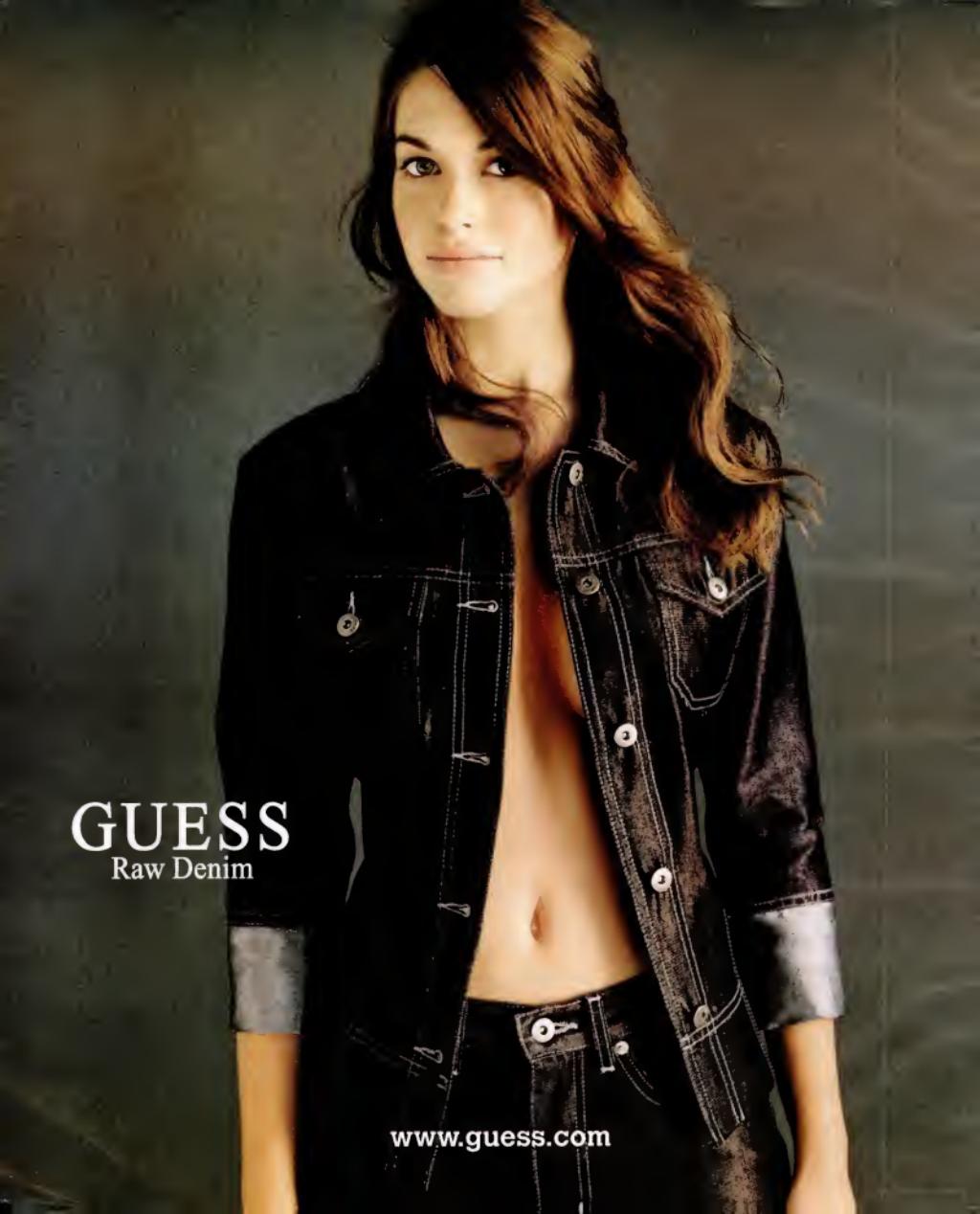
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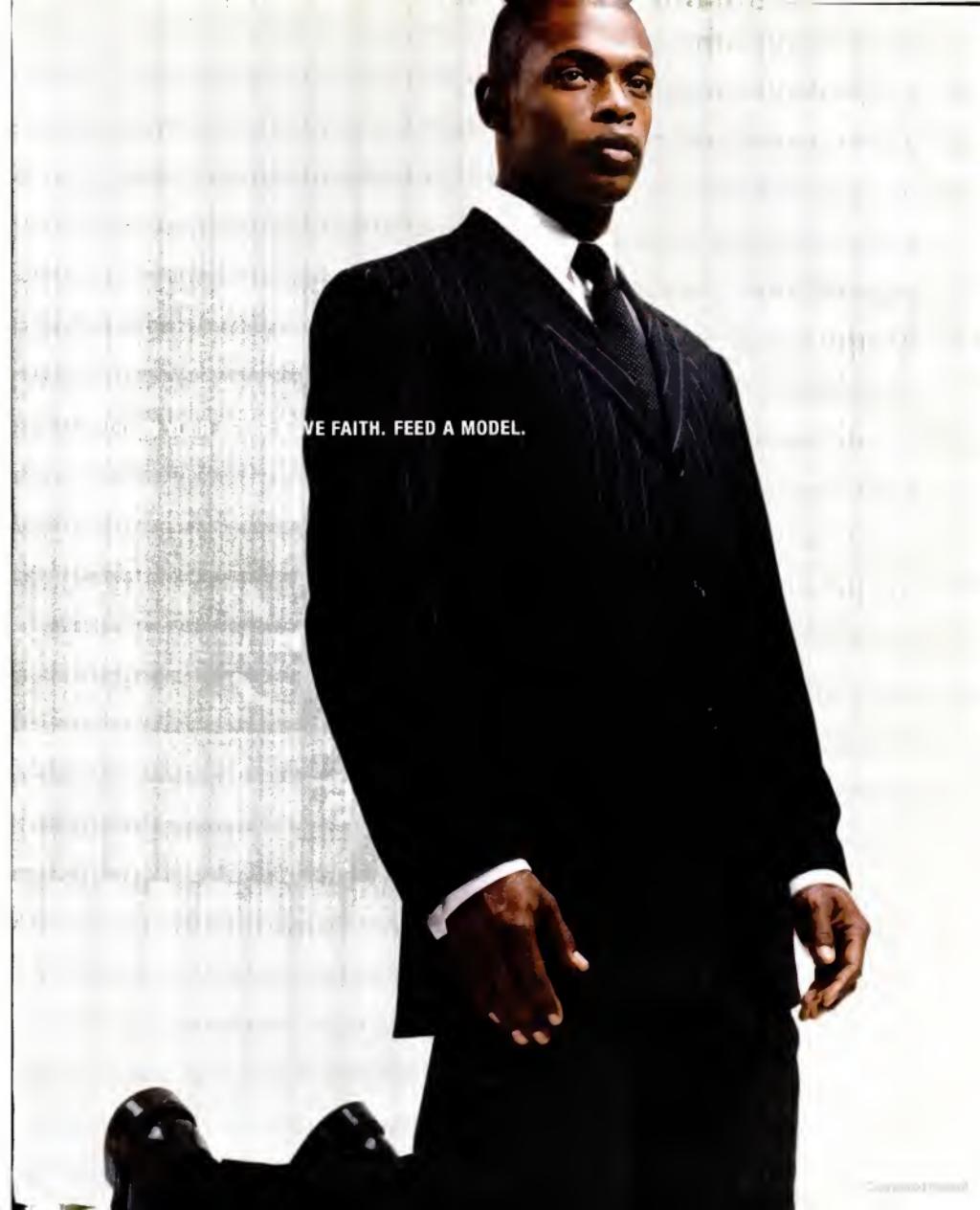
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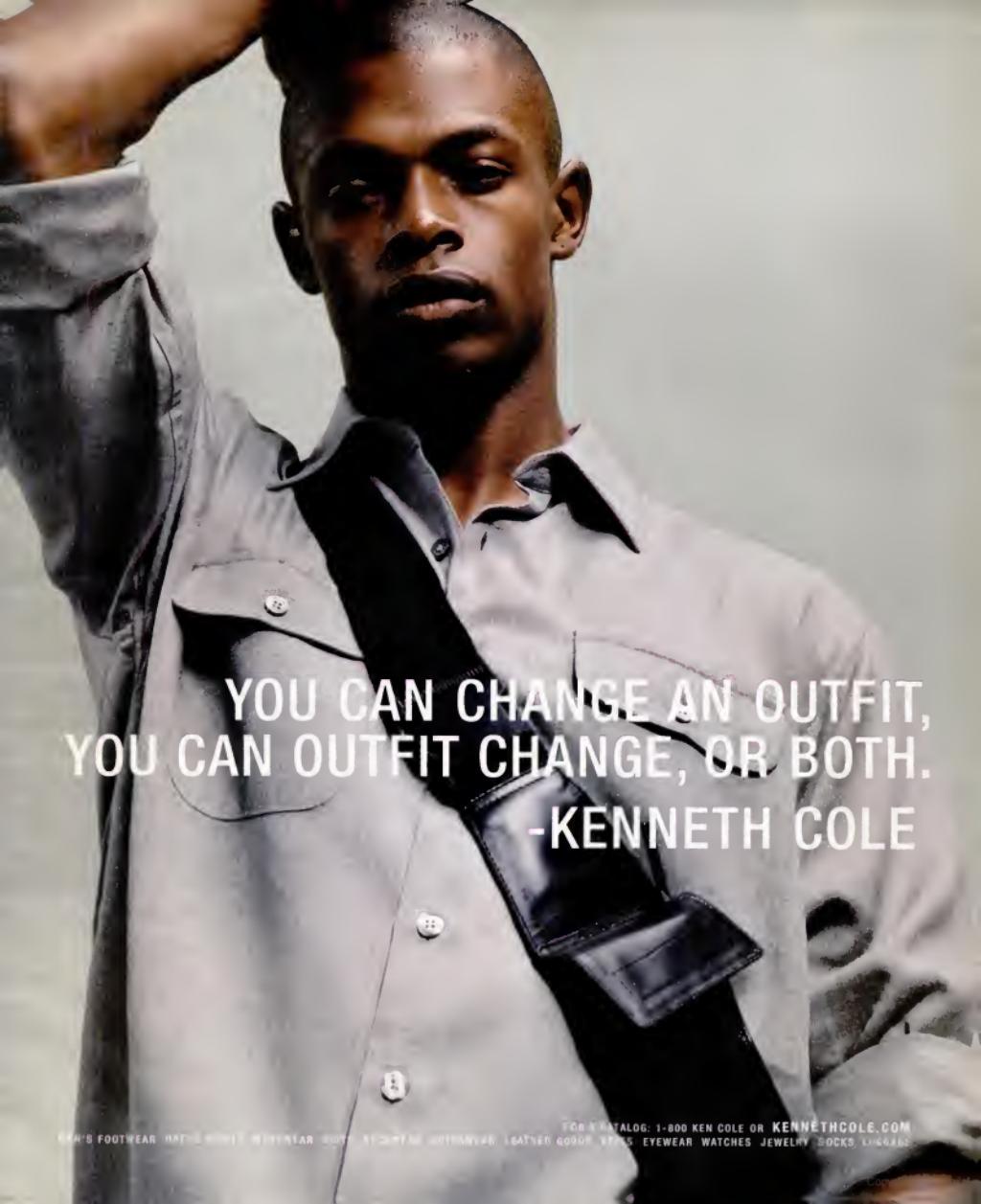
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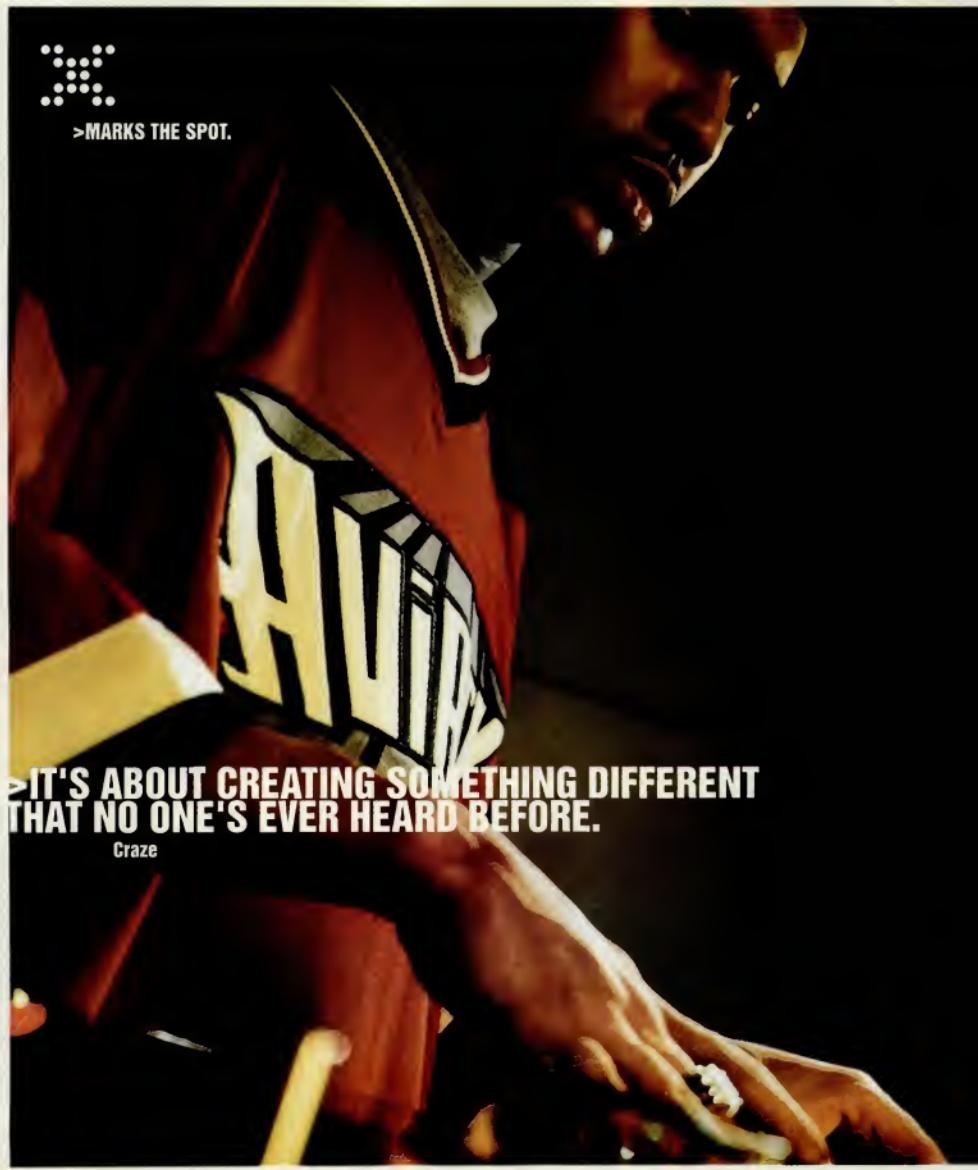


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FEATURES

SEPTEMBER 1999 • VOLUME 7, NUMBER 9

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JUICE ISSUE**

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- 137 2001: A VIBE ODYSSEY** What if the world survives the year 2000? Fast-forward into the next century for a sneak peek at the hottest trends, people, places, and things.

- 182 MISS MARY MACK** When Mary J. Blige speaks, her voice—that liquid roughness, that husky power—turns conversation into song. *By Danyel Smith*.
Photographs by Marc Baptiste

*Song. By Danyel Smith.
Photographs by Marc Baptiste.*

- 170 THE CUT CREATOR** What is it about wunderkind producer Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins, a clean-living son of a preacher man, that has Michael Jackson, the Spice Girls, and even Puff Daddy jockin' his beats? Plus: a look at industry hit-makers bringing noise in the '90s.

By Chairman May

Photograph by Nipke Rosenthal

- 178 SWAMP THING** It's been five years since psychedelic visionary Carlos Santana's last studio album. Now he's back, and getting love from hip hop's finest. By Greg Tate.

Photograph by Norman Jean Roy

- 184 THAT IS BLACK MAGIC** If you thought the music of Britney Spears, Backstreet Boys, and 'N Sync was strictly white powder pop, think again. Behind today's sugary superstars are a team of black producers, managers, and songwriters who keep the vanilla tasty.

By Rob Hammer



ON THE COVER: Mary J. Blige photographed exclusively for VIBE by Marc Baptiste; styling by Elm Wilkens; makeup by Nzingha for Diorilor Martin; hair by Diana Alvarado for Dolce & Gabbana International; manicure by Lorraine Thompson for Zane; and long-length blue dress with draped effect by Plain Sud; Red sheared mink coat with fox collar by Guillaume Poirier of Ben Kahn Furs; TOMMY jacket, denim, and diamond necklace by Fred Leighton.
Face & Body: Moby by M.A.C and Givenchy
ABOVE: Gray knit top by Helmut Lang; skirt with middle zipper by Pierre Balmain; capri pants by Dolce & Gabbana; belt by La Perla





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180 VIBE Q: DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC?

Legendary hoop star Magic Johnson gives *Harry Allen* the dish on basketball, business, and living with HIV.
Photograph by Dan Winters

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Photographs by Piotr Sikora

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210 A FORMAL AFFAIR Sometimes advancing the race means facing up a pair of shiny white shoes, straightening the lapel on your tuxedo, and stepping out with your best girl. Photographs by Barron Claiborne and Carl Posy. Text by Karen R. Good

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Photographs by Sophie Pangrazzi.
Styling by Emil Wilbekin

ABOVE: Shawn photographed by Arnaldo Anaya-Lucca; styling by Emil Wilbekin; black leather poncho by Tommy Hilfiger Collection



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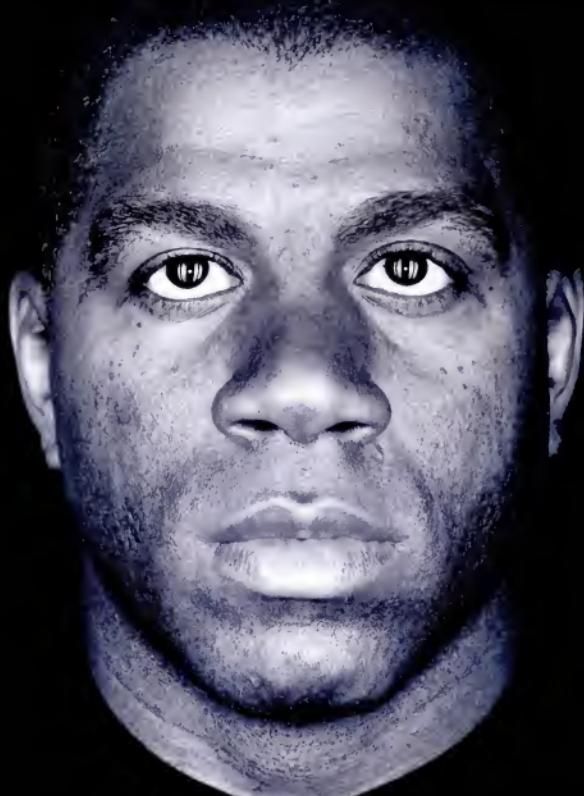
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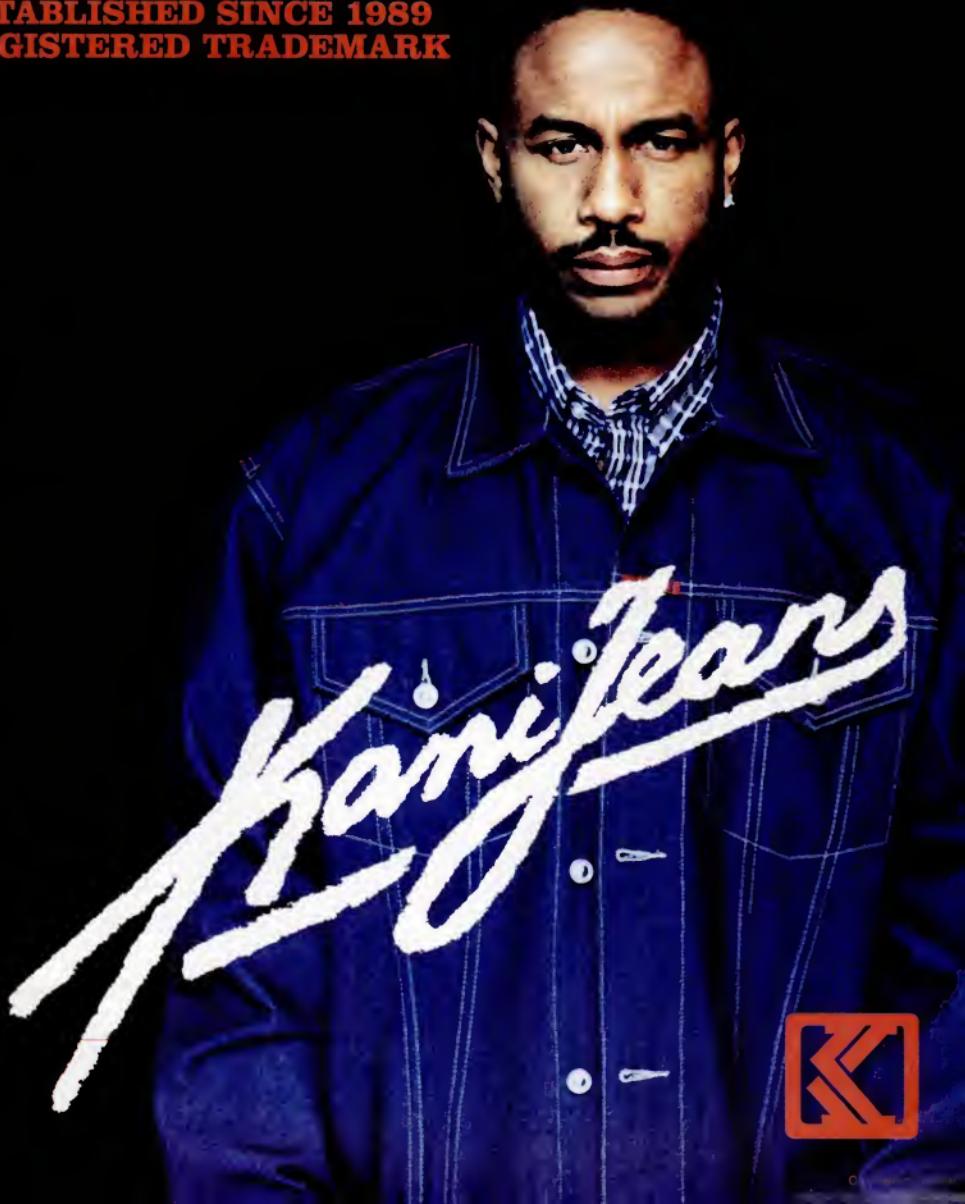
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PROFITS MAKE UP THE ROTATION OF THIS NATION AND PLANET,
BUT WE'RE ALL PUPPETS, IN THE HANDS OF THE MAN THAT TRULY PLANS IT,
RAMPANT THOUGHTS WROUGHT MY MENTAL FRAME,
GOING THE WRONG ROUTE FOR DOLLAR AMOUNTS PLUS THE FAME.
BUT I MAINTAIN, WITH PICTURES THAT THE SCRIPTURES DELIVER TO MY BRAIN,
EVEN THOUGH MY PHYSICAL IS CLOTHED THROUGH CAPITAL GAIN,
THE BIG APPLE'S TAMED, BUT IN THE SUMMER IT'LL BLAZE,
AND BRING MORE HEAT ON THE STREET THAN A SEA OF PROPANE,
I EXPLAIN THE STREETS AREN'T ME, BUT I AM THE STREETS,
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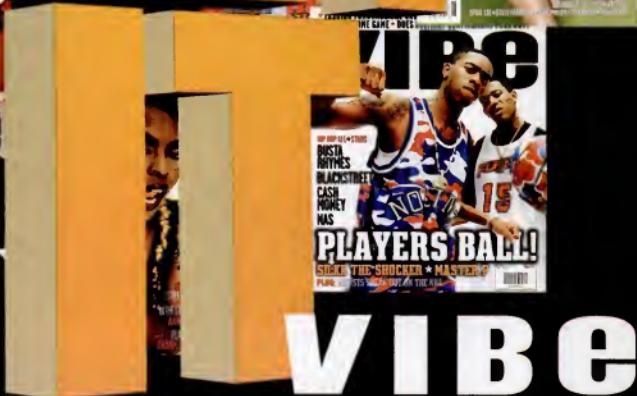
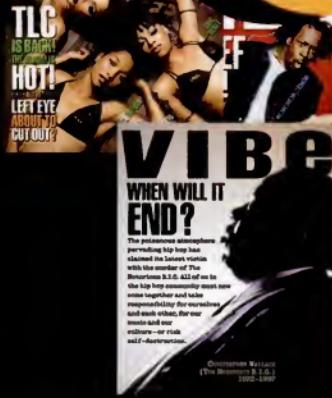
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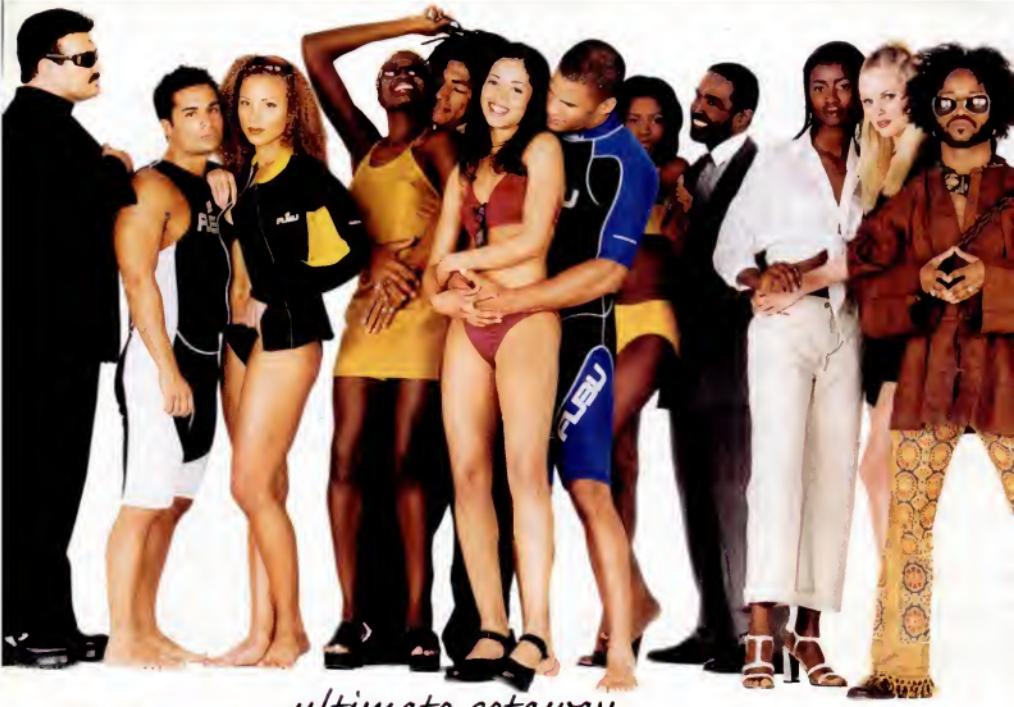


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WE'RE ON A MISSION

So: sixth anniversary. And like Tony Toni Toné sang on their first album, *it feels good*.

And what also feels awesome is the fact that for the first time in the history of this magazine, we have a woman—the massively gifted, constant, gorgeous, forthright Mary Jane Bilge—on the cover of our annual "Juice" issue, which, for us, symbolizes pop power. We've done Mike Tyson, the Notorious B.I.G. and Puff Daddy, Wu-Tang Clan, and Will Smith. But this is Mary's third cover. She's been up, down, and all around. Through it all she's remained our fave because, while she is the very definition of glamour and popular soul, Mary is about truth, aspiration, and voice—and about struggling to tame the flames of power. (They can warm or burn.)

This issue is about "power," yes, but it's also about what's "next"—because really, power is not so much in what's going on right now but in being able to see what's around the corner. Power's in knowing who's simmering and about to boil, about what's boiling and about to blow up. (Obviously, we know how to pick 'em, because Mary J. was in the fall 1992 launch issue of VIBE, in the Hype section, which became the Next section in September 1993.)

We've worked crazy overtime putting this issue together—even missed a Raekwon listening session Loud Records had set up especially for us—but it was worth it. Outgoing music editor Sacha Jenkins gets things started with an essay about why good can sometimes be great. Quincy and Bobbito chill with cool tracks. Gladys Knight deconstructs the past and the future. Legend-in-waiting Rodney Jerkins gets Chairman Mao'd. Six-string king Carlos Santana takes us back to the future. Noraeaga represents for Queens—the once and future capital of hip hop (but we've got fresh 'n' fertile Philly in here, too). And Harry Allen speaks with the heroic Magic Johnson, the next real mogul. Plus, we have the next dilemma for MCs: Can you be ghetto and fabulous? Can you go around the world earnin' mo' money, come back to where you grew up, and not have mo' problems? A look at the murder of the Lost Boyz's Freaky



MICHAEL DORRANCE

Tesly of senior associate editor David Bry, VIBE also takes you on a journey straight to 2001, so you don't even have to guess what's going to be happening post 2G.

So you see, we've been working. And what better place to be sweatin' it out? The people at VIBE are mad cool, and we all have millions of insane ideas that we whittle

down (with prodding from managing editor Sarah Min) to the shining group of stories and images you find in your hands. We're proud to put out this magazine.

We know that even when the going gets tough, we're still the only music magazine (much respect to *Blaze* and *Spir!t!*) covering music and culture in a thrilling, brilliant, provocative, new, next way.

For me, and for the entire VIBE staff, it's like Special Ed said, "This is a mission/Not a small-time thing." Look around it's us, baby. VIBE, six years later. Still serving our brilliant, music-loving, interactive, curious, sexy, life-embracing readership. That's juice. That's power. I said it last year to our so-called competitors, and I say it again: Follow the leader. (*How can you, though, when you can't even see us? That's how tight we are. So how you gonna even try to be us?*) Still—do by. Long as you know that even at six years old, VIBE is still what's next.

DANYEL SMITH, *Editor-in-Chief*

THE PEOPLE AT VIBE ARE MAD COOL, AND WE ALL HAVE INSANE IDEAS THAT WE WHITTLE DOWN TO THE SHINING GROUP OF STORIES AND IMAGES YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS.

Tah gets right at these questions. Oh, and you're wondering who's next after Britney Spears, the Backstreet Boys, and Jordan Knight? We've got a great story by Rob Kenner about the soulful songwriter/producers you didn't know were behind the teen dreams currently on the radio.

And the fashion section: just off the hook, is all. Passion, drama, girls with attitude, dominoes, mean-muggin' brothers, a black French-Canadian in a 'do rag and a three-button Cerutti suit! And that ain't even half of the garments fashion editorial director Emil Wilbekin and his crew have assembled: As usual, VIBE style is about what people like us (and you) will be rocking next year and the year after. Speaking of which, cour-



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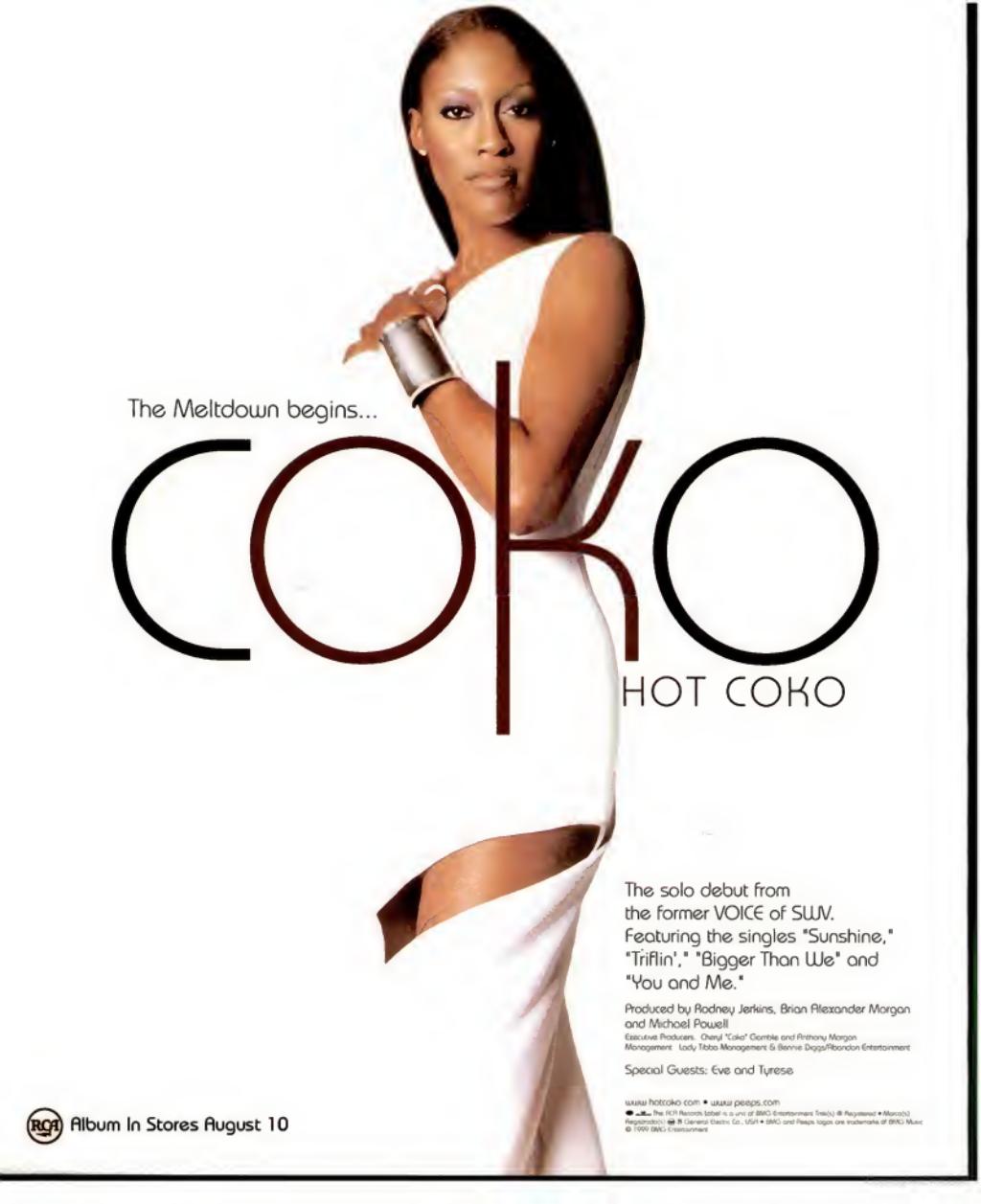
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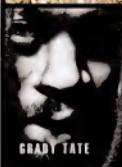
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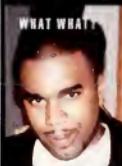
THE GUEST LIST



Bobbito "The Barber" Garcia built with Quincy Jones for this month's Soundcheck (page 110), but the two had met before. "Three years ago," says the five-year VIBE contributor, "Quincy took live calls on my radio show while people snapped on him." Garcia, a 1988 Wesleyan University graduate, owns two hip hop specialty stores (Bobbitti's Footwork, in New York and Philly) as well as Fondu Em Records. "Quincy's like one of those cool daddies," says Garcia. "You can offer him a plum and just chill. It's like, 'Yo here's a peach.'"



Greg Tate, 41, got to meet a hero this month. "The first concert I ever saw was Santana," says Tate, who flew out to California to interview the guitar god for "Swamp Thing" (page 178). "Some of the notes he played that night are still ringing in my head." The Ohio-born journalist, who's busy working on his first sci-fi novel, *mandela ain't free*, can't get enough of the psychedelic supernova. "Santana personifies the best spirituality and culture of the '60s, without any of the self-destructive, narcissistic bullshit."



WHAT WHAT? Queens, N.Y., mike wrecker **Noreaga** takes us on a schizophrenic mind trip in the "interviews": the dark side of his own personality, a hustler named Melvin Flynt in "O'2 Minds" (page 204). "Melvin is a character created by the record industry," says Mr. "Supertug." "N.O.R.E. is a before and Melvin is an after." The first-time VIBE contributor has always had journalistic aspirations. "I actually wanted to major in journalism when I attended college in jail. But I liked fast money." An up-and-coming writer on the rise? Not if he's in it for the money. We'll let you decide.

Everyone loves VIBE's fabulous photos. This month, we assembled four of the hottest camera pros for our juiciest issue. VIBE photographer-at-large **Marc Baptiste** is the eye behind Mary J.'s beautiful images (cover and "Miss Mary Mack," page 162) and the VIBE fashion story "Whitney Porshe" (page 235). Fellow at-large lensman **Piotr Sikora** hooked us up with shots of Ricky Williams (Quicke, "Jock Star," page 256) and Noreaga ("O'2 Minds"). Boston's **Barron Claiborne** blessed the photo essay, "A Formal Affair" (page 210), and the VIBEStyle spread, "Trick Daddy" (page 226). And Arnaldo Anaya-Lucca snapped flicks for VIBE fashion's "Uptown Saturday Night" (page 218) and VIBEStyle's "Street Games" (page 230).

IN-HOUSE SECTION SPOTLIGHT

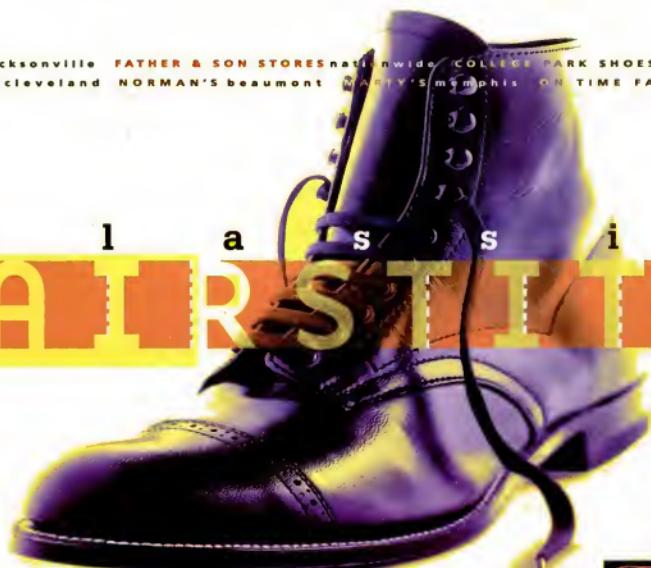


This issue marks the end of an era at VIBE, as music editor **Sacha Jenkins** leaves us for freelance independence. "Writing gives you freedom. With editing, you have to work within a system and a set rhythm," says Jenkins. "If I'm not writing about music, I can write about a roach, or my invisible friend who loves the Mets." A magazine magnate since 1989, the Queens, N.Y., native has founded three publications: *Graphic Scenes* and *X-plicit Language*, *Beatin'*, and his current baby, *ego trip*. This October, St. Martin's Press will release *Ego Trip's Book of Rap Lists*. The book's soundtrack will drop simultaneously on Rawkus Records. Jenkins's departure has the editorial staff in tears. "He's like my brother," says editor-in-chief Danyel Smith. "I'll miss him around the office not just because he's been a great partner in putting out the magazine—a real leader—but because he's an amazing person." Jenkins won't be completely gone, though. He'll be a contributing writer for VIBE and sister magazine *Spin*. Our man is making moves. We wish him much luck and success. He'll definitely be missed.

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SPEAKEASY

EQU

"You had the best clothes, the best cars but you always ended up dead or in the pen. I said to myself, 'I can't go to jail. I'm too fly for that.'" —Ice-T, too pretty to be a gangster (www.tvguide.com)

"**Asidebar? I'm a sidebar to Puffy! Do you know Puffy works for me? Puffy comes to my Grammy party! Puffy comes to my parties in St. Bartel! I have not risen to this status in the industry to be a sidebar to Puffy!**"

—Arista CEO Clive Davis, upon being asked to grant an interview for Forbes's March 22 cover story on P-Diddy (Forbes)

"**There are, I think, three countries left in the world where I can go and I'm not as well-known as I am here. I'm a pretty big star, folks—I don't have to tell you. Superstar, I guess you could say."**"

—Bruce Willis, apparently transmitting direct from planet Hollywood (members.aol.com/WordPlays/complain.html)

"In a fair world, I'd probably have three or four Oscars. I could have gotten one for *Jungle Fever*, I could have gotten one for *Pulp Fiction*, I could have gotten one for *A Time to Kill*, I could have gotten one for *Jackie Brown*. Easy."

—Samuel L. Jackson, speaking the truth (Icon)

"Putting on some fabulous outfit at home, making dinner for a few friends, then passing the mirror once in a while and noticing how fabulous I look."

—Milla Jovovich, describing her favorite way to spend a night (Movieline)

"**But rappers keep wishing / To be in my position / Knowin' good and damn well they ain't no competition / Huh, I gotta give it to you kid, that's ambition / For you to perpetrate the role of me, the Big Daddy! / The Big Father? / Naah, don't even bother."**"

—Big Daddy Kane ("Long Live the Kane," 1988)

editor's choice

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—The one and only Muhammad Ali, as quoted in Irwin Shaw's 1969 essay "Muhammad Ali and the Little People"

from the VIBE vault

FEBRUARY 1995

"I definitely feel like I came a long way from where I was before, because I was a savage. And when I say I was a savage, trust me." (Some things she won't discuss, like the scar under her left eye.) The thing that changed her, she says, was "wanting to learn, wanting to be somebody. Just knowing what my gift is and wanting to carry that out. I was afraid to let people see my real feelings."

—Mary J. Blige discusses the journey from stress to success with VIBE's Emil Wilbekin



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GOOD BOY GONE BAD

I'm responding to your Mase story ["State of Mase," by Minya Oh, June/July 1999]. It's interesting that he gives girls a two-year period where he doesn't buy them gifts. What if the situation were reversed, and she put

"DOES MASE BELIEVE ALL HIS FANS ARE HOES? WOULD HE LIKE SOMEONE TO REFER TO HIS SISTER, BABY STASE, AS SUCH?"

a two-year hold on sex? Would he be willing to put in his time? I don't think so. I've read a lot of articles about Mase, and it seems like he wants a perfect girl. If she's so perfect, what makes Mase think she'll want him?

Nicole D.
Oklahoma City, OK

I can't lie, I thought of the VIBE staff as being a bunch of haters. But seeing my boy on the cover of your magazine with three fine shorties made me think twice about the assumptions I've made. Apologies are in order!

Aaron Yates
Pine City, NY

Mase is so funny! And I never knew how intelligent he is, with all of his extended metaphors, illusions, and extreme bathos. He spits out wisdom with magnificent eloquence. I may be exaggerating a bit, but he can teach some young men imperative life lessons. Magic Johnson may have helped Mase mature just a tad. Maybe instead

of just acting he should try writing a few screenplays too. Have I found the next Matt Damon?

Lakisha Simmons
Phoenix, AZ

I was impressed by the Mase article. I wasn't a big fan of his until he admitted that he's not really a "rapper" but an "entertainer." Now, with his recent departure from the rap game, he may be the smartest rapper of all. He made his loot and now he's out. Props go out to Mase, and I wish him well. God bless him.

Boyoyjory@aol.com
(via e-mail)

Some of my peers feel like Mase doesn't deserve the success he's achieved. But after reading "State of Mase," I'm proud to say that

he's a talent to be respected—because he's about family. His heart and mind are in the right place. Most artists forget where they come from, but Mase is

MAIL

always reminded by a simple rubber band. That touched me.

Todd "Adrian" Price
Newark, NJ

I was disturbed when I read Mase's comment "Biggie's the hardcore niggas, but he ain't gonna appeal to the hoes like I do." How can he say something like that, when the majority of his fans are female? Does Mase believe all his fans are "hoes"? Would he like someone to refer to his sister, Baby Stase, as such? In that same article he stressed loyalty. Well, Mase, with comments like that, you're showing no loyalty to fans who gave you the success you're enjoying today.

Dana La Forey
Bronx, NY

I was floored by the beauty on the cover, but too bad you spoiled it with Mase. I'm sure I speak for many male readers when I say you should do more with these ladies alone. What are the names of these models? My dreams need detail.

Jerome

Addressee withheld

Editor's note: The models featured on the June/July 1999 cover are (left to right) Crystal Hammond, Goldie, and Tamara Spoder.

The cover of VIBE reads "Don't Hate Because the Ladies Love Mase." After reading the article, it's very hard to have any love for Mr. Besta. Was it really necessary to front on Brandy like that? He was probably just keeping it real—

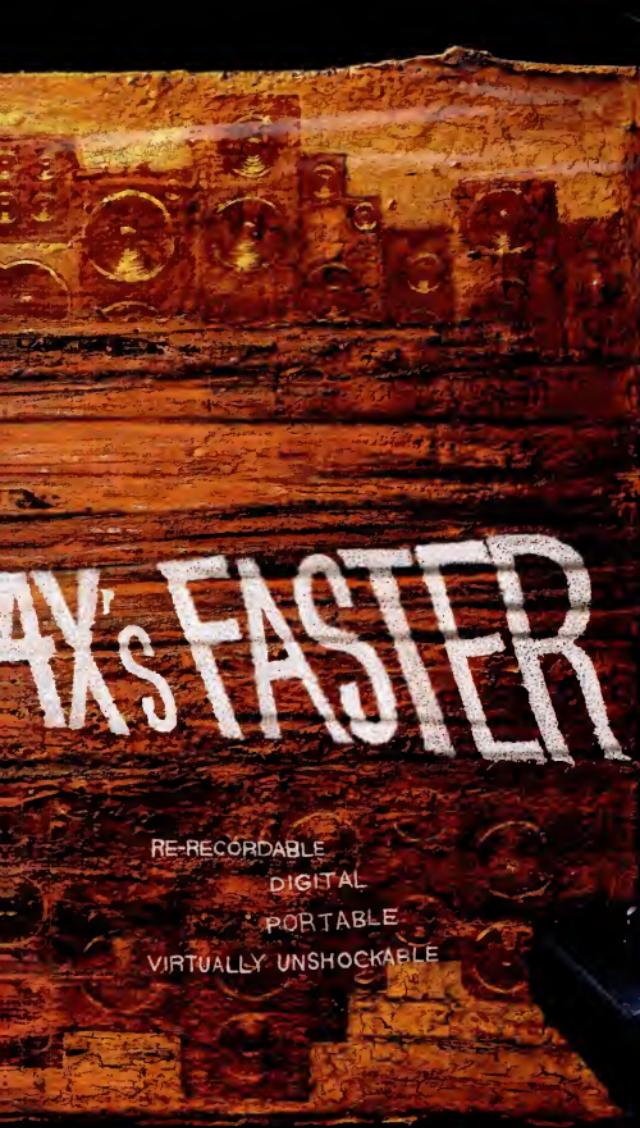


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real *ignorant!* I wonder how he would feel if his sister, Baby Stase, was famous and some marginally talented pretty boy referred to her as a car he may have backed up in a couple of times!

*Yusuf Mustafa
Los Angeles, CA*

Mase is smart. He is in the entertainment business doing what everyone else only dreams of doing. He's making money and not being greedy. He wants to pursue acting

"BLACK, BLACK, BLACK IS ALL / SEEM TO HEAR. UNTIL I'M ABLE TO BE JUDGED BY THE CONTENT OF MY CHARACTER AND NOT THE COLOR OF MY SKIN, WHY SHOULD [EMINEM] BE?"

and not rap forever. Let him be! Who cares about him wearing silvery, shiny suits. I bet Biggie's "Mo Money, Mo Problems" made those same haters get up and dance. Loyalty is the key, and I will continue being a loyal listener.

*Nicole "Nicety" Chaplin
Miami, FL*

I knew it was a sad day when I saw Mase on the cover. This conceited character has no place in hip hop. I've never heard anyone mention the words "ice" and "platinum" so much. It's a shame that most true hip hop crews and artists cannot attain superstar status while less-deserving acts such as Puffy and Mase rise to the top. Groups possessing a little bit of lyrical content and substance should be rewarded more often. They are the ones who

himself. The whole "white rapper" issue is ludicrous. I'm a black female from the Bronx, and I see past the color of someone's skin. Hip hop is not something you do or say but something you are. If Eminem wants to rhyme about "...breaking your legs till your bones poke through your skin," then let him. You can't judge a rapper until you've lived that person's life.

*Kaamila Jackson
Stapleton, NY*

I didn't like when Vanilla Ice said, "Eminem raps like a girl. I know he's all over MTV. Much success to [Eminem]—I'm not a playa hater. I just don't like that squeaky little voice." I can't believe Ice had the audacity to say such things. He sounds like the playa hater he claims not to be. He's just mad

Eminem possesses. I take his CD for what it is—an excellent, ingenious, imaginative example of hip hop. I know he's often criticized for his choice of topics, but he has a right to rap about anything. The CD is not for children and is clearly labeled such. I'm a young, intelligent black female and have never done any type of drugs. I've never committed any crimes. I do not condone domestic violence or rape. Listening to this CD does not change my opinions about any-

I was truly disgusted after reading "13 Ways of Looking at a Whiteboy." I'm sick and tired of these so-called white MCs giving talented African-American entrepreneurs a bad name. White people are forever stealing from blacks and then reaping the benefits. I'm tired of black producers writing for these white artists, and then the white artists getting all of the praise and glory. Eminem is just what he acts like: poor white trash who's an insult to any and every black MC around. He is no different from Vanilla Ice, Snow, the Beastie Boys, and all the rest.

*Markita Crump
St. Louis, MO*

Rob Kenner's "13 Ways of Looking at a Whiteboy" has to be the most blatantly racist article VIBE has ever printed. Almost every sentence referred to the fact that Eminem is not a person of color. If this article had been printed in a so-called white magazine, talking about an African-American artist, there would be a huge uproar.

"AFTER READING THE ARTICLE ON THE TUNNEL, I'VE GOT TWO WORDS, 'I'M GOING!' IT HAS EVERYTHING I NEED: THE HOTTEST MUSIC, THE HOTTEST DJS, AND THE HOTTEST STARS."

there's a new white rapper on the rise. Vanilla Ice never was and never will be the dopiest white MC, no matter how many albums he sold. I'm an MC out of Houston. As a black man from the Fifth Ward, I know I have good taste in music.

gets offended when people ask "So being a white rapper..." and "Being that you're white..." and "So growing up white..." and white, white, white is all he ever seems to hear.

Well, you're in a black envi-

Musis is supposed to be the "universal language." I thought this meant that every person—regardless of age, race, intellectual level, socioeconomic status, or geographical location—could convey his emotions to others and be understood, not ridiculed. I believe that we should all be color-blind, but not so blinded by a person's color that we fail to truly see them.

*Shanna Steve
Birmingham, AL*

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will carry the hip hop torch into the next millennium.

*Johnnie Brown
Sacramento, CA*

WHITE OUT

I credit Eminem ["13 Ways of Looking at a Whiteboy," by Rob Kenner, June/July 1999] for being faithful to his fans, and more importantly for being faithful to

Eminem's style is off the hook. If Vanilla Ice thinks Eminem sounds like a squeaky girl, then Ice, Ice is crazy.

*Josh Benjamin
Kennedy, TX*

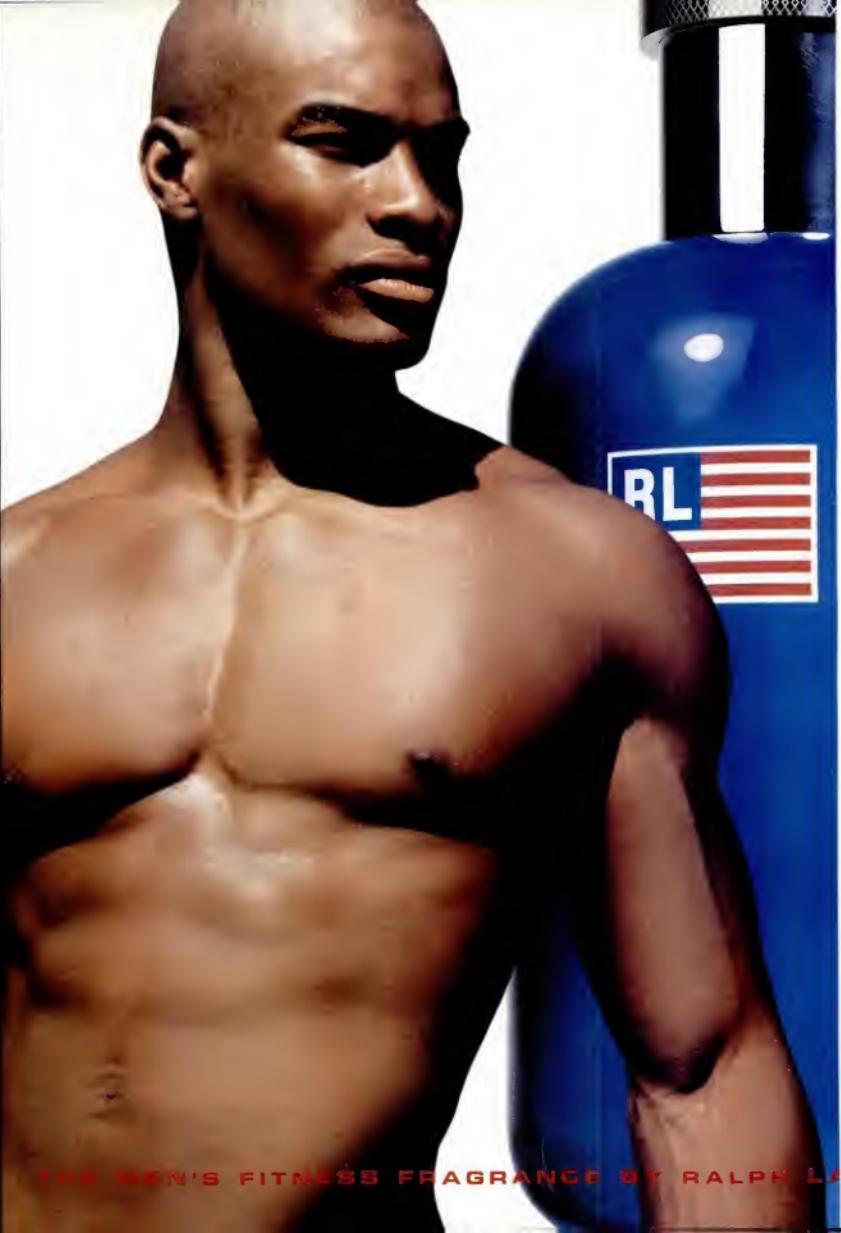
I heard three cuts off [Eminem's] *Slim Shady* and became an immediate fan. I wasn't prepared for the lyrical skills and talent that

ronment, *white boy*. Just as I live in this white world and get asked time and again "So being a black female..." and "Being that you're black..." and black, black, black is all I seem to hear. Until I'm able to be judged by the content of my character and not the color of my skin, why should be be?

*Nykya Lee
Inskster, MI*

I really enjoyed your article on Eminem. Although I have no intention of buying his CD, I have mad respect for what he's trying to accomplish and the truth that came across in the interview. I do have a problem with Vanilla Spite! Didn't we melt him years ago?

*Reggie Brown
Atlantic Beach, FL*



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Thirty-two musical giants. Five frenzied weeks of competition. Four regions. Only one will survive. Summer madness is coming to Vibe online in July.

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Considered the UPI for urban music, vibewire is dedicated to providing the industry's latest news with daily updates three times a day. Be the first to know what's going on in the entertainment world.

This month on **Vibe.com** check out **OnTracks** featuring:



Coko



JT Money



Snoop Dogg



Aaron Skye

at www.vibe.com/ontracks

Copy
onradio

TUNNEL OF LOVE

Although I've been a loyal subscriber for many years and look forward to receiving VIBE each month, no article has prompted me to put pen to paper as much as Minya Oh's "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil" [June/July 1999]. I couldn't put it down. Oh succeeded in taking me back to earlier club days. Originally from California, I remember me and my girls spending hours getting ready to go to the club—putting on outfits inspired by hip hop but with a twist of sexiness (baggy jeans with tight tops), borrowing makeup, and playing "pump it up" music to get us hyped before leaving. We waited

in long lines, but it was worth it. Once we got in, we didn't stop shaking what our mamas gave us until they turned the lights on and everyone scrambled like roaches so you couldn't see what they really looked like. It's amazing how lighting and a few drinks from the bar can make even the ugliest person look *aight*.

Kisha Glover-Hill
Richmond, VA

After reading the article on the Tunnel, I've got two words, "I'm going!" I have driven to Virginia, North Carolina, and Washington, D.C., to go clubbing. I don't know why we

never went to the Tunnel. It has everything I need: the hottest music, the hottest DJs, and the hottest stars. Virginia is coming real soon, showing nothing but love!

XL Williams
Danville, VA

BANK AND LOVLEY

As usual, the pages of VIBE are filled with beautiful black men [VIBEStyle, "Criminal-Minded," June/July 1999, photographed by Marc Baptiste]. And the special double issue for summer proved to be a page-turner. The photos of Mase, Treach, and the actors of HBO's *Oz* were enough of a fix to

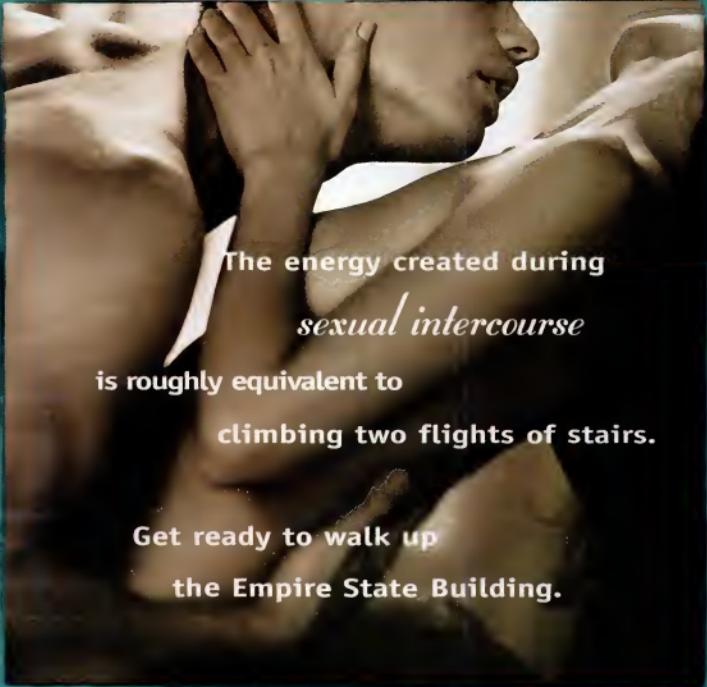
get me through the dog days of summer.

Stephanie Legare
Rockville Centre, NY

First, let me start off by saying rest in peace, Raymond Rogers, a.k.a. Freaky Tah [Start, Hard Knock News, June/July 1999]. I'm disappointed and angry about the lack of respect that VIBE has given Freaky Tah and the Lost Boys. In my eyes and many others', the Lost Boys are one of the greatest groups in the game. Unfortunately, they are also one of the most underrated. Right now I'm looking at your June/July issue, and I'm shocked that this is all



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you have to say in tribute to Freaky Tah. The sad thing about it is you're known for writing four- and five-page articles on Biggie and Tupac. No disrespect, but how come the same couldn't be done for Freaky Tah?

Sharaad Christopher

Jacksonville, FL

Editor's note: We've been working on something for you. See page 198 for "Queens Logic."

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

Thank you for "Force MCs" [by Harry Allen, Look, June/July 1999]. I never thought about the commonality between hip hop and *Star Wars* until they were juxtaposed successfully by Allen. This story highlighted the pessimism that critics directed toward *Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace*, predicting the film's short life expectancy. I agree that hip hop also falls into the same parameters as George Lucas's brainchild, since neither was expected to generate billions. Although rap music and the sci-fi smash affect

woman involved with a beautiful black man, and I have experienced the pain of cruel ignorance displayed by both blacks and whites. I applaud Malone's insight and his escape of the illusion that so many Americans feed on.

Kimberly Fields
Richmond, KY

I'd like to give props where props are due! If [Bonz Malone] keeps dropping knowledge to the black brothers and sisters that are faithful readers, he might accomplish his goals. I'm always around a lot of negative things and depend on Bonz's words for support. Keep up the good work. I'll always be a faithful reader.

Cross
Buffalo, NY

ONE BAD BROTHER

Thankyou, thankyou, thankyou for the Domepiece "Gotta Have It" [as told to Brent Fason, June/July 1999] on one of the old school's finest, Bobby Womack.

"I'M DISAPPOINTED AND ANGRY ABOUT THE LACK OF RESPECT THAT VIBE HAS GIVEN FREAKY TAH AND THE LOST BOYZ...THE LOST BOYZ ARE ONE OF THE GREATEST GROUPS IN THE GAME."

many lives in a positive way, Allen included some of their flaws. Despite the few blemishes, hip hop and *Star Wars* will always play a significant role in my life.

Leon Laing
Harrisburg, PA

There is no bloodline connecting *Return of the Jedi* and *Con Air*. *Return of the Jedi* is a classic film; *Con Air* is not. Get it together, or prepare to be shown the true nature of the Force.

Tommy Sigmon
Address withheld

Thank you for the June/July 1999 *Tuph Street: Truth and Consequences* ["Covert Opz," by Bonz Malone]. I am a white

Womack's candor in print, on vinyl, and on the radio is so refreshing. He's truly the poet of the ghetto. Bobby is bad. He's one of the realtest entertainers I've ever seen or heard. I've never had a chance to see him in concert, but I'm hoping one day soon that I will.

Doreen Ambrose-Van Lee
Edwardsville, IL

Bobby Womack is truly one of the all-time greats, an unsung hero. I never purchased a Womack album, but every song I've heard by him confirmed that he's one bad brother. He's responsible for brothers like K-Ci. Thanks for recognizing real artists.

Paul Polk
Kennedy, TX



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AIN'T NO JOKE

Your article on Steve Harvey [Quickie, "Jokers Wild," by Gabrielle L. Gabriele, June/July 1999] blew me away. I can't believe what a jerk he is! He says he doesn't owe his fans anything? Hey, if it weren't for us, he wouldn't have a career. And what's his deal with white girls? Steve, we're supposed to be over racism, remember? VIBE, thanks for helping me to see the true side of this stuck-up, egotistical comic!

Christi Rahn
Tucson, AZ

SOLVE YOU-NEED-TO-BE-WORKING-AT-VIBE 20 QUESTIONS

I am a fan of VIBE's 20 Questions and have been following it from day uno, so here are my 20 Questions:

1. Doesn't Mya look like a new version of Mariah Carey?
2. Why do stores place condoms in front of the cashier—does the whole world have to know you're having sex?
3. Isn't it about time we heard a Biggie sound-alike, since we have eight Tupac sound-alikes?
4. After Tupac came up with "thug life," why is every rapper now claiming to be a thug? (Should there be a college course called Thugology to teach these cats what a thug is?)
5. We all watch [HBO's] *Sex and the City*. Why are there no black characters? Does that mean black people in New York don't get down?
6. Hmm...Vanilla Ice hating on Eminem. Didn't we give him the same love we're giving Eminem?
7. Why does *Blaze* magazine censor every curse word except "nigga"?
8. Why does Jennifer Lopez sound like a cheap version of Celine Dion?
9. Why is every producer biting Puff's chanting on records?
10. Why are most New York rappers sounding like the southern rappers?
11. Has the thug fad replaced the every-rapper-is-a-pimp fad?

12. Isn't Slick Rick the greatest old-school MC?

13. Doesn't Ricky Martin remind us of Jon Secada?

14. Is it just me or are we all sick of Hype Williams's videos?

15. We're making the bootleg music industry worth millions—is it because we just can't wait for the hot joints?

16. Is the South taking the West Coast's place?

17. Don't Chanté Moore and Chari Baltimore look like twins?

18. Will hip hop become like rock 'n' roll—stolen by white people?

19. Can Run-D.M.C. hold their own after these many years?

20. Why does every rapper have a tattoo above his belly button ever since Tupac got the THUG LIFE tattoo?

Yemi, a.k.a. Cee
Rye, NY

JET SET

VIBE, thank you so much for your Props on the Jets [June/July 1999]. They were one of my favorite groups back in the day, and I always wondered what became of them. It's nice to see they're doing well, despite setbacks. I'm one of the few (maybe) black fans of the Jets, and I'd like to see them get together to do a reunion album.

Nat-Nat (*Da Ghetto Princess*)
Summit, NJ

VIBE encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to VIBE MAIL, 215 Lexington Avenue, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10016 (include your daytime phone number). Or send e-mail to vibe@vibe.com. Send photos to VIBE YOUR BEST SHOT (same address). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Photo submissions will become the property of VIBE and will not be returned.

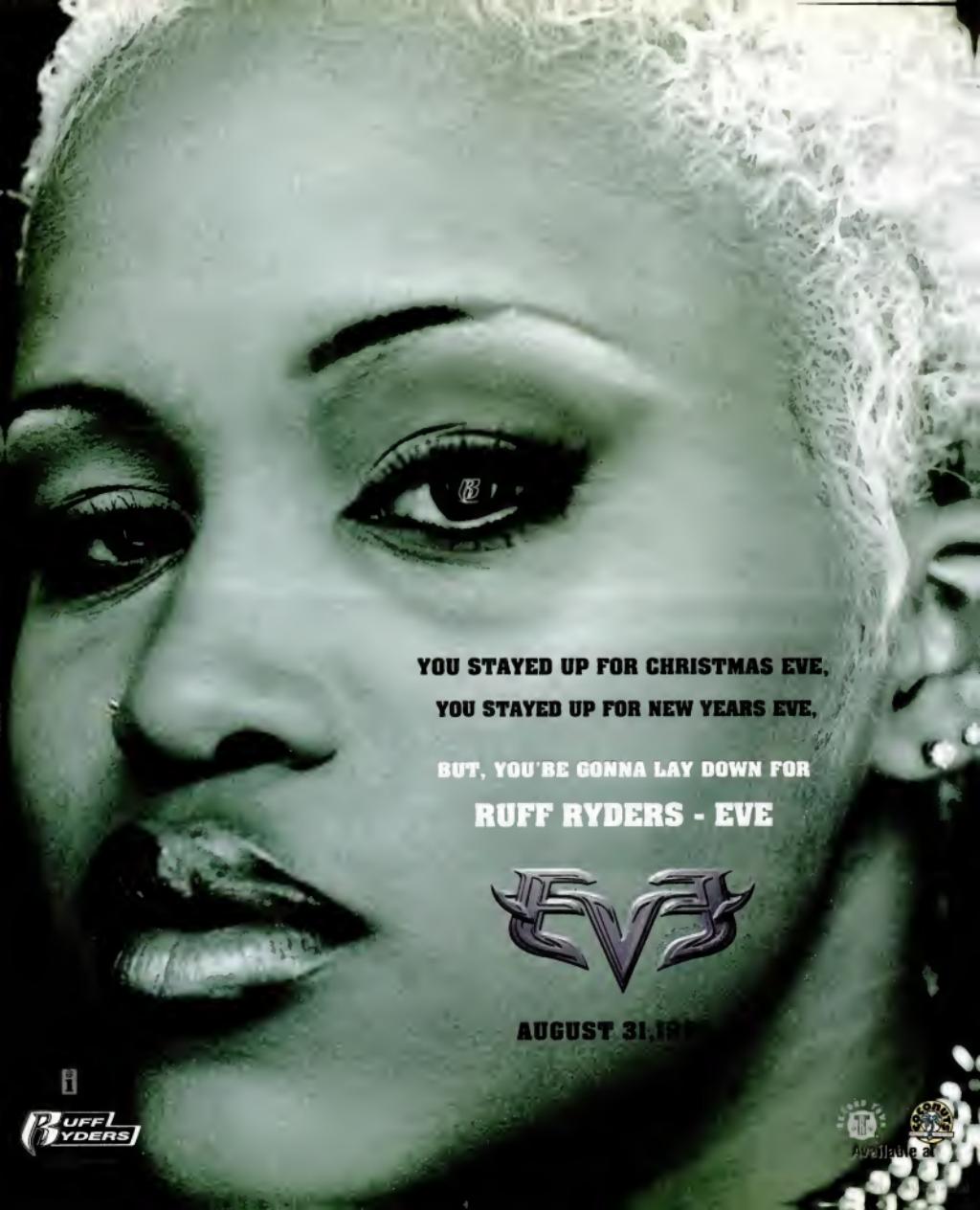
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by Marc Ecko

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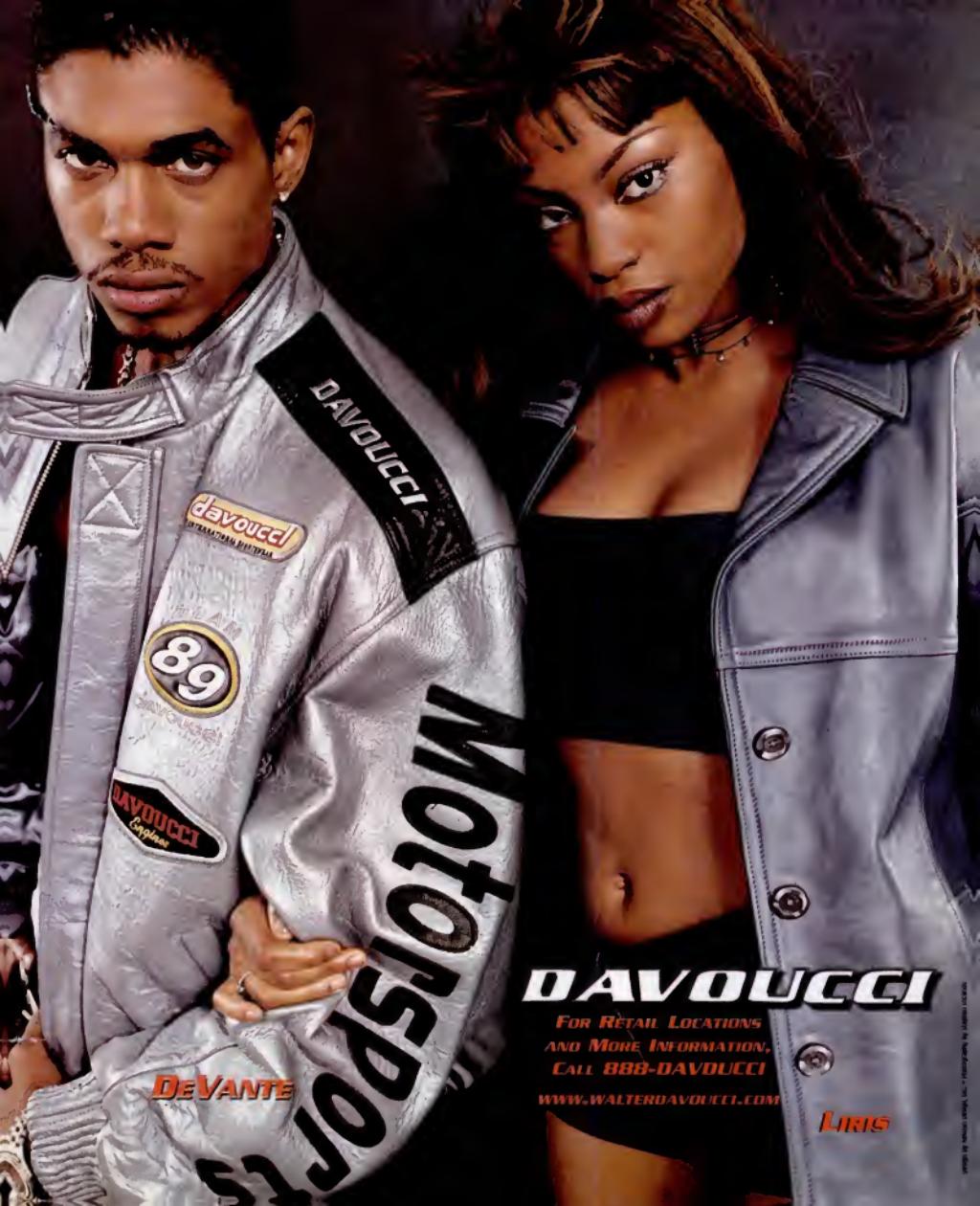
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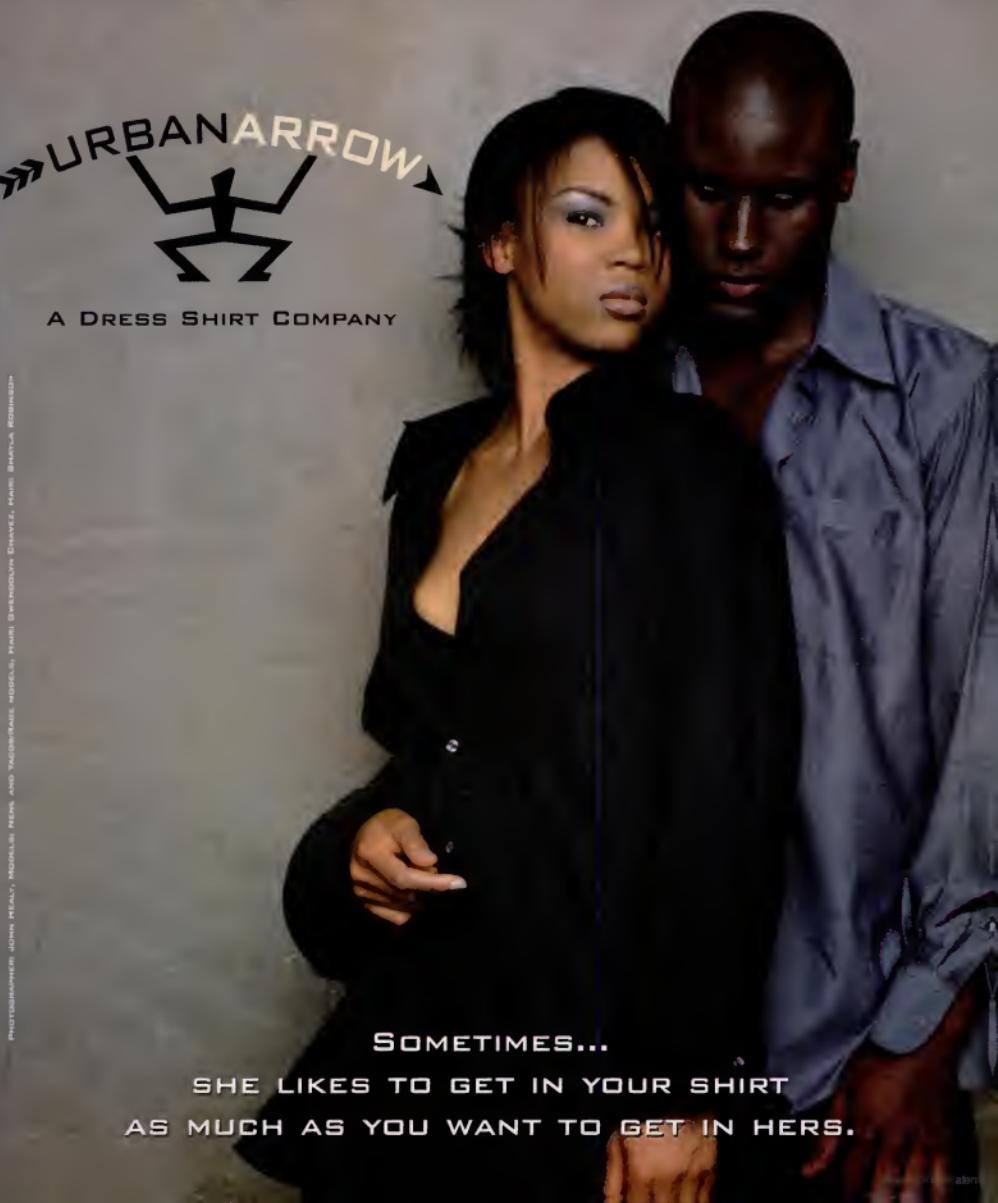


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START

A FRIENDLY GAME OF BASEBALL

In the game of baseball, a single is a good thing. There's no such thing as a bad single, 'cuz every time yo' monkey ass is on base, you're helping your team achieve its goal, even in some little way. In the game of rap, though, a single can't just be a *good* thing, it must be a *great* thing, everything—first base, second, third, grand fucking slam. I guess that's why the sport isn't as much fun for the major-league playas as it used to be.

Take Dres and Mista Lawnge. Black Sheep. Back in '92, their art seemed effortless. "You can get with this / Or you can get with that." The unforgettable chorus from the 'Sheep's first single, "The Choice Is Yours," boomed out of speakers from Monterey to Massapequa. Their premier album, *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* (Mercury, 1993), SoundScanned 817,000 copies. Three years later, their second album: No one knows the title. No one remembers the single. Dres and Lawnge part like the Red Sea. Bye-bye, guys.

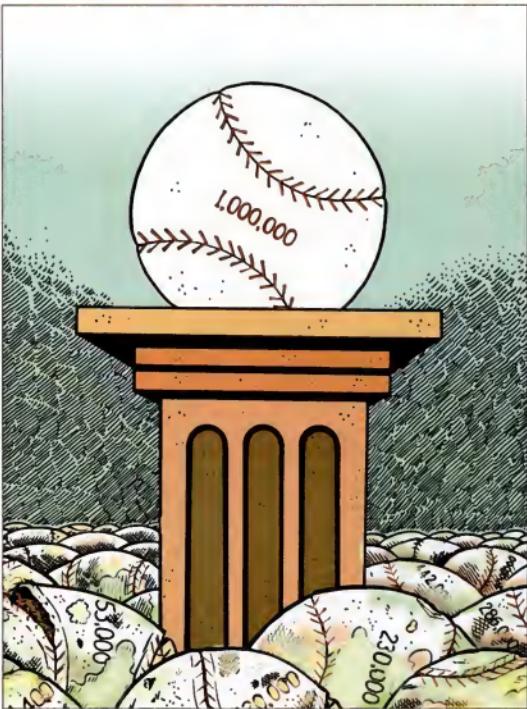
In days past, a group that sold that many records would get more than two at-bats. A stronger commitment from their employer. I mean, in my book, work like that would easily qualify you for lifelong employee-of-the-month status. Picture framed on a plaque, nice little inscription about the good you done did.

Fast-forward to 1999. Dres steps into the offices of VIBE with a wax rendition of his independently released solo effort, *Sure Shot Redemption* (Ground Control/Nu Grav Alliance), tucked under his arm. He seems calm. Maybe it's because, now, he's finally gonna get some. "If I sell 20,000 copies," he says, "I'm doing pretty good."

You do the math: Let's say Dres profits \$6 a unit (compared with the single ducat that the average major-label contract allots to artists per album sold). If the new disc sells what a solo Pras's did (no dis), Dres'll be a wealthy, self-sufficient ghetto supastar. Forget about pricey music videos and high-floss jewelry that goes gaudy after six months. When you listen to his album, it doesn't sound as if he stayed up late thinking about what radio programmers were gonna feel. It sounds like he just tried to make every tune count. Like he's going for some little hits. Advancing one (base) line at a time. Fresh out the box, no frills—just rap.

Ask Dres: Going for self is playing smart. But it takes balls. And bats.

Sacha Jenkins



**JUICY LYRICS 112 / SURVEYING SURVEILLANCE 113 / LIVE EVIL: KID ROCK 114
THE CHONES FAMILY: OHIO PLAYERS 116 / VIDEOGASM: THE MATRIX EFFECT 118**

SOUND CHECK

Bobbito plays the tracks. Quincy Jones states the facts.

Aw, man. If you don't know who Quincy Jones is, put down the magazine now. I cherished the opportunity to interview Quincy, a man who has 25,000 musical compositions to his credit. I didn't have to worry about playing him stuff he'd know, because I knew he'd appreciate songs he wasn't familiar with. I chose music from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, because I knew he'd find a common thread. I could go on talking to Quincy for hours. The interview was a six-decade history lesson in music. I felt like I was learning from a musical Yoda.

Russ Meyer's Original Motion Picture Soundtracks—"Kelly," from the film *Finders Keepers Lovers Weepers* (Q.D.K. Media, 1968)

Q: Porno, right?

B: From a Russ Meyer film. Do you know of him?

Q: Oh, yeah! He did that film *Vixen!*. Russ Meyer, oh my God.

B: For a '60 soft-porn movie, this is the best musical score I've ever heard.

Q: [Reading the album credits] Paul Sawtell? He was a very little-known film composer. He did all kinds of movies. I didn't know he did early porn, too. He was legitimate. This score must be from the early '60s. I still can't remember the girl in the movie's name.

B: She must've had big breasts, 'cause all the women in Meyer's films were huge.

Q: Oh, yeah!

Syreeta—"Black Maybe" (MoWest/Motown, 1972)

Q: Who's this?

B: Syreeta Wright.

Q: Wow. Stevie Wonder's girl.

B: Stevie wrote this song.

Q: Syreeta wrote "You've Got It Bad, Girl" with him. She used to sing on the background of "I'll Be Good to You." She's hot, man. She worked with Brothers Johnson. Her voice registers.

B: This album was phenomenal.

Q: I've never heard it. This is like jazz underground—like bebop. I like this a lot. And that's Stevie playing synthesizer.

B: Signature Stevie. I play this for a lot of die-hard Stevie fans, and they don't know this album.

Q: I love to hear young people freestyle, jamming like this. There's nothing at stake, just you go where you want to go. This is a ride.

Self Scientific—"Return" (S.O.L. Music Works, 1998)

Q: I love the combination of beat and rhymes. That's right in the pocket.

B: "In the pocket"? Not to say that you're old, but I noticed a lot of older musicians say that.

Q: I'm 66! That's old!

B: Okay.

Q: "In the pocket" is when it's in tempo. No other tempo works but that one. It's like God locks in the beat and there's nothing to talk about. I'll give you

the best example. One day we were rehearsing, and Neil Hefti played a tune at half speed. It was a magical moment. I still get goose bumps thinking about it.

B: I love playing hip hop like this on the radio.

Q: The MC is so comfortable with the music.

B: This record is not transparent. It sounds new every time I hear it.

Q: Push yourself as a listener, struggle to memorize the lyrics.

B: It's unfortunate 'cause most of the rap nowadays that's popular...

Q: It's transparent. Easy to absorb. I agree. You can have "[Gettin' It] Jiggy With It," which is a simple two-bar loop the whole song, or you can have some shit that touches the bottom of your soul. That's the best, 'cause then you can't control yourself. This song is beautiful. It's not "All About the Benjamins"—it's all about your soul.

Bwana—"Chapumbambe" (Caytronics, 1972)

Q: It'd be nice to see Cuban music come through today like it did in the '40s with Dizzy Gillespie. That's what this song is. It's a merger.

B: Afro funk.

Q: Afro-Cuban and American.

B: With a touch of rock. What was the cat's name that collaborated with Dizzy?

Q: Pozo or Dizzy. Machito with Charlie Parker. That's when I was in New York. We'd go to the Palladium every Sunday. Marlon Brando used to go. There'd be a purple haze of weed coming out the room. I was writing for Tito Puente then. Carlos Valdez used to play in my band.

B: My dad used to go. He said Harry Belafonte and Rita Moreno would be up there on the regular too.

Q: Sundays at 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

B: Sounds like a church gathering.

Q: It was like church. We lived there. Brando used to dance his ass off. He studied with a famous dance group called Katherine Dunham. They danced to everything—African, Caribbean, Latin.

B: I can believe Brando danced, 'cause

back then so many movies had dancing in them.

Q: Yeah. Now you only see Ally McBeal dancing in the bathroom.



Tough incision: Bobbito gets served while Quincy's on the cut

PHOTOGRAPH BY LESLIE DELA VEGA



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LAST STRAW	4	Hydro: 1.5 Elements: 3	Flavor so unique it's off the meter.	3.5

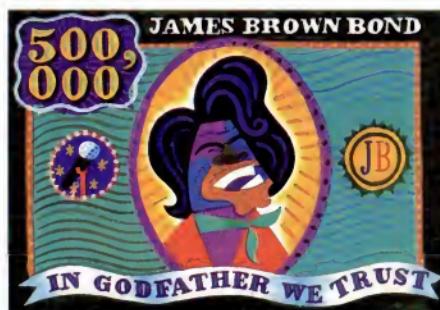
START

BOND...JAMES BROWN BOND

A new financial deal revs up the moneymakin' "Sex Machine" and paves the way for hip hop's future earnings

Papa's got a brand-new bag. And it's stuffed with more dollars than Donald Trump's tighty-whities.

This June, James Brown, the Godfather of Soul, closed a deal to close to \$50 million with New York-based investment bank The Pullman Group. Through a process called securitization, Brown relinquishes the rights to his future song-generated royalties in exchange for the money up front, which comes from investors snapping up bonds that will pay dividends for years to come. (After the bonds mature, the rights go back to the artist.) But the average funk fan shouldn't expect to buy JB Bonds; they will be sold in minimum increments of \$500,000, and one currently unannounced



company is expected to buy the whole lot.

So far, similar deals of so-called Bowie Bonds (named after rocker David Bowie, who signed the first music securitization deal for \$55 million in 1997) have benefited time-tested songwriters such as Ashford & Simpson ("Ain't No Mountain High Enough"), Holland-Dozier-Holland ("Ain't

Too Proud to Beg"), and resilient rockers like Rod Stewart and Iron Maiden. Bowie Bonds, which are basically investments in entertainment assets with strong earnings history, allow artists to get paid quickly for song-based royalties they would otherwise wait years to receive.

"Hip hop artists sample the heck out of

James Brown," says David Pullman, the deal-clenching creator of Bowie Bonds and head of The Pullman Group. "It seems only fitting that he get paid now for his future royalties."

But does hip hop itself have a future in securitization? It all depends on market longevity. Lately, it's been common for hip hop to represent close to one third of the albums in the *Billboard* 200, but the only rap album consistently lodged in the *Billboard* Top Pop Catalog Albums Top 50 is the Beastie Boys' 1986 album, *Licensed to Ill* (Def Jam). "[Hip hop] might not have the [long-term] mass appeal of pop or rock music," says Jim Cochran, senior associate with Dewey Ballantine, LLP, a New York-based law firm specializing in securitization, "but it definitely has potential."

David Pullman, whose bond packages have included revenue rights to Tupac's "Hit 'Em Up" and Biggie's "Gettin' Money (Remix)," says that "hip hop deals might become the classic securitization deals."

If the rap fans of today are the major investors of tomorrow, the answer to "Jigga, What?" just might be "Money, Cash, Bonds."

Tomika Anderson

POURING RHYMES GALORE

"Sip the juice / I got enough to go around" rhymed Rakim on "Juice (Know the Ledge)." Here are six more of hip hop's all-time juiciest rhymes.

1. "Buck-naked hangin' loose / A large cold wooden bowl of freshly squeezed orange juice." —Afrika Baby Bam, Jungle Brothers, "Kool Accordion" 2 "A Jungle Brother" (Warner Bros., 1993)

2. "I know this girl named Tropicana / She's always juicein' / Producin' cash from a sexual task." —Lord Jamar, Brand Nubian, "Slow Down" (Elektra, 1990)

3. "Give me a lighter / Whooff! / Now you're cut loose / From that Jheri curl juice." —LL Cool J, "To Da Break of Dawn" (Def Jam, 1990)

4. "Stop givin' juice to the Raiders / 'Cuz Al Davis never paid us." —Ice Cube, "The Wrong Nigga to Fuck Wit" (Priority, 1991)

5. "Talkin' about I need a Philler right before I get loose / Poor excuse / Money please I get loose off of orange juice." —Phife, A Tribe Called Quest, "Phony Poppers" (Ariola, 1996)

6. "I let loose with the juice / When I do rock / I'm too hot / Some say I got more juice than Tupac." —Redman, "Time 4 Sum Aksion" (Def Jam, 1992)



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Step Inside





On the rise



Step Inside

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, And May Complicate Pregnancy.

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synthetic tobacco

TO SEE OR PRIVACY?

The unclear legal lens of video surveillance

Modern U.S. courts have held that various Amendments—particularly the First and Fourth—implicitly create a “zone of privacy” around every citizen. Because the Supreme Court has yet to rule on the private use of video surveillance, legal cases involving its admissibility and use are currently judged on an individual basis. With the New York Civil Liberties Union’s 1998 statistics estimating that less than 300 of the 2,397 surveillance cameras in Manhattan are city-owned (the rest being privately owned and monitored), it’s no surprise that opinions on the role of video surveillance in society vary greatly.



Red pins on Wall Street-area map mark known surveillance cameras

“We need to network hundreds of thousands of neighborhoods with camcorders, set up block-watch camera systems to watch police. Edit the stuff down and make video leaflets, put it on the Internet. Unify [people] in opposition to government frameworks that perpetuate [police violence]. **”**

—Bobby Seale, grassroots organizer and cofounder of the Black Panthers, April 1999

“The use of video cameras in the public spaces of New York City as a means of deterring and interdicting crime is a concept that...concerns many New Yorkers and creates in some the apprehension of an Orwellian society.”

—Howard Saffir, police commissioner, City of New York, July 1998

“A combination of security measures, including surveillance cameras, are designed to protect our guests. According to FBI statistics, we have the lowest rate of crime compared with comparably sized U.S. cities.”

—Rena Callahan, Walt Disney World Co. spokeswoman, June 1999

THE ALL-SEEING ONLINE EYE

Sites of interest from the World Wide Web

CUDDLY SEES ALL.

For \$159, T&M Enterprise offers its huggable surveillance agent, the perfect accomplice for sugar daddies who need to know whom their baby is cuddling while they’re away. The teddy bear houses an undetectable black-and-white pinhole camera with a Lux lens that views better in low light than the human eye and comes with RCA connectors that easily hook up to a TV or VCR. Available at www.t-msafety.com.

OTHER SITES WORTH A CLICK AND A PEAK:

At the Big Brother on Demand Web page, www.bbod.com, you can view hundreds of still-frame and streaming-video images from around the world. The site is primarily a library of links to personal, government, and privately owned cameras that transmit images onto the Internet. Available at www.medieatear.com, a media-watchdog site, is the N.Y.C. Surveillance Camera Project’s stunning map pinpointing camera-monitored areas in Manhattan. View the grounds of Universal Studios and its new sister park, Islands of Adventure, at www.usf.com/webcam. Rotate the Web-cam to view whichever park you prefer and zoom in up to 100 percent, enough to see park visitors and whatever souvenirs they’re toting quite clearly. For a spy-type look at post-Cold War Russia, www.kronmail.com provides regularly updated video images of Moscow’s Red Square.



This well-worn bear (not from T&M) just might be watching you.

BIG BROTHER IS (REALLY) WATCHING

From Orwell to Rockwell and beyond: Key moments in the history of surveillance

1948: TV producer Allen Funt premieres his surprise surveillance program, *Candid Camera*, on ABC. Catch-phrases “Smile—you’re on candid camera” and “With a hocus-pocus you’re in focus” catch on. (In 1998 CBS relaunched the program with Funt’s son Peter hosting;

Suzanne Somers cohosted.)

1949: George Orwell’s visionary novel 1984 (Martin Secker & Warburg) is published; novel coins the phrase “Big Brother is watching you,” which becomes synonymous with state-sponsored surveillance of civilians.

1984: Rockwell’s synth-funk smash “Somebody’s Watching

Me” goes to No. 1 on *Billboard*’s R&B chart.

January 18, 1990: A joint FBI-D.C. Police undercover operation uses a hidden camera to videotape Mayor Marion Barry smoking crack in a Washington hotel room. Barry is arrested for cocaine possession and subsequently does jail time, before being released and reelected mayor of D.C.

March 3, 1991: George William Holliday points his new camcorder at Rodney King being beaten by LAPD officers at Los Angeles’ Hansen Dam Park.

1994: Hall of Fame rock ‘n’ roller Chuck Berry pays \$830,000 to approximately 60 women he allegedly videotaped while they used lavatories at his Missouri establishments.

May 2, 1999: British police charge 22-year-old

David Copeland with murder after three nail-bomb

attacks on ethnic minorities and gays kill three people and wound more than 100. Copeland was identified from closed-circuit television footage recorded shortly before the first attack on April 17.

May 1999: The U.S. Supreme Court cites “the right of residential privacy” of the Fourth Amendment in barring police from allowing camera crews to accompany officers on raids of private homes.

May 1999: Cops, Fox’s top-rated police surveillance show, airs its 400th episode.

Research and reporting by Josh Loeb, Jacob Ogle, Peter Relic, and Oliver Sylvain

LAPD beat King on camera



START

START



V LIVE

KID ROCK

June 11, 1999

Jones Beach Amphitheatre, Wantagh, N.Y.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FARRELL DUNCAN

How's it feel to be looking at the *real motherfucking' thing?*" It's tall '98, and Kid Rock—Detroit's other Caucasian sensation—has the gall to ask this question in front of a dumbfounded L.A. club crowd, even though his new album hasn't made *Billboard's* Top 200. Fast-forward to June '99, and the perpetually cocky bastard with a microphone in one hand and a bottle of Jim Beam in the other has reason to be proud: That same album, *Devil Without a Cause* (Atlantic), is in *Billboard's* Pop Top 10. After he swaggered down the long road from his first rap album, *Grits Sandwiches for Breakfast* (Jive, 1990), to recent MTV microwave treatment for his aggro anthem "Bawitdaba," Kid Rock's sales have finally caught up with his ego. Ian Rogers



Kid Rock's vertically challenged hype man, Joe CI

NO BILLS

[pnb nation stands for "post no bills".
the term "post no bills" means, "do not put up advertisements". we have
used this term as a metaphor for, individuals to not put up false images
of themselves, but to represent whoever they are. from day one,
this has been the guiding principle of our collection.]



PNB NATION CLOTHING



ALL IN THE FAMILY

Keeping up with the Choneses, VIBE's JUICE basketball fam BY PETER RELIC

Collegiate cool: Jim Chones circa 1970

START

What's your definition of a baller? Money, fame, and icy chams? Well, ease up, hose down, and boomer to this:

Jim Chones—50-year-old eight-season NBA vet, member of the Los Angeles Lakers' '79-'80 championship team, and father of five by his wife of nearly 25 years, Elores—eyes a new wall-hanging in the rec room of his Pepper Pike, Ohio home. From outside there's the patter of basketball being played by his younger daughter, Kaayla, and triplet sons, Kameron, Kyle, and Kendall.

A quick take on these Chones kids: Kaayla, 18, 6'4", 1998 and '99 Ohio Division I co-Player of the Year averaging 23 points and 19 rebounds per game; Kameron, Kyle, and Kendall, all 15-year-old left-handed rising sophomores at Cleveland's Orange High School,

AAU basketball standouts and hot prospects for college recruitment. Kareeda, the eldest at 22, graduated from Marquette University this spring and now does marketing

for the Milwaukee Bucks.

But the past is always a prologue; we start there.

Jim Chones grew up the son of a Racine, Wis., foundry worker, watching the Boston Celtics on black-and-white television. "One time they played against Oscar Robertson, the Big O, and he destroyed them," Chones recalls in a smooth, direct tone. "So I went to a cigar store where they had magazines, found one with Oscar Robertson on the cover. In the article, he said that athletes should use sports as a vehicle to be educated. That got me thinking." In 1969, Chones, then 6'10" and 185 pounds ("I looked like I was from Biafra"), netted a scholarship to Marquette University.

During Chones's junior year, his father succumbed to lung cancer. "My mother was working as a salad lady at a great Italian restaurant. I looked at our situation"—Jim was the eldest of six Chones kids—"and we weren't making it happen." The year before, a player named Spencer Haywood had successfully invoked Sherman antitrust laws in a bid to play in the NBA before he had gotten his degree. Jim Chones was basketball's

(From left) Kendall, Kareeda, Kaayla, Kameron, Elores, Jim, and Kyle Chones



Kendall



Kyle



second such "hardship case," and in 1972 he agreed to a contract for \$125,000 a year for five years with the New Jersey Nets.

By '79-'80, Chones was with the Los Angeles Lakers, backing up Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, part of a championship-winning ensemble that included Spencer Haywood, Jamaal "Silk" Wilkes, Norm Nixon, and Magic Johnson. The following year, Kareeda Chones turned 5 and mama Elores gave birth to their second daughter, Kaayla. "My wife wasn't only raising our kids," Jim explains, "she was raising me, too."

Through the lens of his own life, Chones reads the maturity levels of today's NBA stars. In the first round of this year's play-offs, "Kevin Garnett blocks Tim Duncan's shot and jumps in Duncan's face, calling him *mutha-tha, mutha-tha*. Tim Duncan looked like he was almost embarrassed [for Garnett]. Both have a tremendous basketball IQ, but the denominator is maturity. Duncan spent four years in college; Garnett bypassed all that and went directly to hip hop."

I don't see anything wrong with signing early; I did," Chones continues. "I do see something wrong with not developing a structure where these kids can have the benefit of good counseling, good education, and good support mechanisms.

It has to come from the NBA, the National Federation of State High School Associations, the NCAAs, the shoe companies, all working together. If not, the athlete stands a lesser chance of becoming a socially adjusted individual."

The Choneses stress academics. Kaayla's headed to N.C. State this fall to play basketball for former U.S.

wp? All the kids declare an interest in playing pro ball. But all have practical alternatives in mind. Kaayla is interested in computer science, Kendall in business management. Kyle wants to work with people, but when he falters at giving specifics, Kaayla chides, "He wants to own a Bob Evans restaurant because he loves their pancakes so much." Kyle

finally went back, finished his philosophy degree, and walked. "I did the grand assembly and everything. I was sitting there with all these kids who were wearing headphones, listening to rap."

"When you're a pro athlete you're better respected than a guy like Bill Gates," Chones says. "All my dreams have come true. My biggest concern

"WHEN YOU'RE A PRO ATHLETE YOU'RE BETTER RESPECTED THAN A GUY LIKE BILL GATES. BUT IF YOU'RE NOT PREPARED, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE BENEFITS."

Olympic coach Kay Yow. The boys work at adhering to the family rule that permits only one C per report card and no D's or F's—or else they'll find themselves pulled off the team.

The Chones home court is a long downhill driveway with a hoop at the end, so that air balls roll down the back yard hill, through a pricker bush, and into a creek. Claims of "I fatched it last time!" are common. The rim is bent from the brunt of dunking.

Kyle and Kendall are 6'5"; speedy Kameron is 6'1". "Save time," he advises as he steps up to guard me, "and gimme the ball now." After 40 minutes of intense but good-natured two-on-two, the thick heat in the Ohio air wins out and we head inside for a roundtable.

What do you want to be when you grow

lols his head toward Kaayla's open bedroom door and its pics of 'N Sync. "I went to see 'N Sync," Kaayla smiles. "I was, like, the only girl over 12 there." She amends her list of fave music to include Jay-Z and Lauryn Hill, while Kyle opts for Bone Thugs and Will Smith. Kendall's loving R. Kelly's "Did You Ever Think." Kameron, who digs DMX, busts out his art portfolio bulging with accomplished pen-and-inks reflecting his interest in the surreal Salvador Dalí. The other kids dig Kam's art in a big way. Their brother-sister bond is strong.

They're all on track toward college degrees, which brings us back to that wall-hanging in the rec room. It's a collage of clippings documenting Jim's graduation from Marquette this past May, 30 years after he entered as a freshman. Chones

now is to allow my kids the opportunity to let their dreams come true. What if one day your biggest dream came true? If you're not prepared for it emotionally, academically, and socially, you're not going to be able to take advantage of the benefits that come with it."

Today, Elores Chones's duties as an educator include being facilities coordinator at Hawken School near Cleveland. Jim Chones is weighing his employment possibilities, casting an intrigued eye on former Bulls helmman Phil Jackson's new gig as the Lakers coach. "I'd love to work with Shaq—what potential," Chones observes, with a perspective that his children will build from for years to come, on and off court. Jim and Elores Chones have provided their children with *juice*. Watch them go.

F/X IN FULL EFFECT

Hip hop videos tap into The Matrix

While Keanu Reeves's simpleton stolidness and Laurence Fishburne's slow-burn cool were inviting, the real star of *The Matrix* (Warner Bros., 1999) was its eye-popping special effects. Flow-Mo, the effect that led filming flocks into another dimension, gives the appearance of cameras moving around an object that itself is moving in slow-motion. Witness the scene where Reeves and a baddie, pistols pointed at each other's heads, circle one another while suspended in midair. Flow-Mo and similar stunning F/X have recently taken virtual hold of the hip hop video world, elevating clips like Dr. Dre's "You Are Everything" (featuring Ja Rule) and Blaque's "808" into *The Matrix*'s funky F/X world.

The Matrix's F/X supervisor, John Gaeta, used two motion-picture cameras and an arcing camera rig with 120 still cameras on it to shoot a single scene from multiple angles at different moments. The resulting images were then blended into a computer model of the action that the filmmakers could manipulate. Gaeta explains that the technique lets viewers "observe dynamically moving events at simulated speeds that aren't

Eminem's "Guilty Conscience":
Trix are for vids



COURTESY OF SONY MUSIC

possible in real time."

In the Dr. Dre-directed video for Eminem's "Guilty Conscience," the effect is used to help illustrate the song's lyrical story line. A frat boy who has lured an underage girl to an upstairs bedroom at a party is frozen mid-move while Dre and Eminem circle him, each proposing into the kid's ear a different course of action—

righteous or exploitative—he should take. For the video for Sway & Tech's "The Anthem," codirector Jeff Richter gave each rapper (including Kool G Rap, Xzibit, RZA, and Chino XL) a different effect. "I liked the Matrix effect, so we redid that [for Pharoah Monch]," Richter explains. "Hip hop videos are escape vehicles, and for someone like RZA, these hardcore effects help create a superhero identity that complements his street image and matches his imagination."

START

HARD KNOCK NEWS

FIRING BACK

On February 4, 1999, four New York policemen killed unarmed 24-year-old West African immigrant Amadou Diallo in the Bronx. In April, a series of nonviolent protests against police brutality in New York resulted in the arrest of such high-profile participants as Ossie Davis and Susan Sarandon. Since then, the hip hop community has also responded. Public Enemy unleashed "41:19" (on their Atomic Pop album *There's a*

gonna do if you get caught by your motherf**kin' crew," railed Flavor Flav. "Shot 41 only hit 19 / They need target practice / That's what it seems to me." Wu-Syndicate released "Bust a Slug" and declared that a portion of the song's proceeds would go to anti-police brutality organizations. The 40 or so artists who helped Mos Def and Talib Kweli's call to contribute to a project called Hip Hop for Respect updated the spirit of 1989's *Self Destruction* (Live/RCA) from the multi-artist Stop the Violence Movement. The message of the *Hip Hop for Respect* EP (Rawkus) is captured in one line from Kweli: "Yo wanna know how to improve on the quality of life? / Try respecting it."

THE WWF SLAMMED

Former World Wrestling Fed-

eration women's champion Sabie (real name: Rena Mero), a former Playboy cover girl, recently filed a \$110 million lawsuit against the WWF, citing an unsafe work environment and harassment, such as the alleged smearing of feces on her personal belongings.

The lawsuit comes shortly after WWF star Owen Hart fell to his death from the rafters into the ring before a match at Kansas City's Kemper Arena on May 23. Legendary wrestling family the Hartys have filed a wrongful death suit against the WWF in a Missouri court.

PUFF OWNS UP

Seen "Puffy" Combs is scheduled to appear in New York Criminal Court August 5 on assault charges relating to the alleged beating of *Interscope* exec Steve Stoute in



April. However, the Associated Press reports that Stoute has approached prosecutors about dropping the charges, while the *New York Daily News* reported a payment of at least \$500,000 to Stoute from Puffy's Bad Boy Entertainment. Speaking out on the incident on MTV, Puffy said, "I feel like I disappointed the hip hop community.... I really made a major mistake."



Poison Going On), in reference to the fact that fewer than half the shots the NYPD fired at Diallo hit their intended target. "Bad boys bad boys, what ya

SLANGUISTICS

Breaking down the new rap language



LICK v.: To make money quickly, to come up. Mac Mall, on the track "Mohave" from his new *Illegal Business? 2000 (Don't Give Up)* declares, "Only one goal / To hit this lick on the stroll." The term is used repeatedly in the Mac Mall-JT the Bigga Figga movie *Beware of Those* (Get Low), as the two rappers try to get cash. In its rap past life, "lick" was a synonym for "the bomb," as in Definition of Sound's groovy '92 LP, *The Lick* (Cypress Hill's bust-a-cap track "Lick a Shot" (1993) derives from the popular Jamaican usage of the term, meaning "to shoot"—as in Michael Palmer's '80s dancehall classic "Lick Shot" ("Them a lick shot / We have to get flat")—or "to smoke," as in Super Cat's 1988 water-pipe paean, "Chalice a Lick." On the food-and-drink tip, boozy Cal rappers Tha Alkaholiks dropped their 1993 theme song, "Likwit," around the time the Beastie Boys popped with "Finger Lickin' Good" *It's*. Equally indelible but arguably inedible was Stick Rick's "Lick the Balls" (1988). On '96's "No Time," Lil' Kim cunningly declared, "No lickie lickie / Fuck the dickie dickie / And you're sticky," which is low-down like the puerile proverbs (allegedly invoked by Big Boi on OutKast's tour bus) "If a girl gets with a girl she has acquired her 'licker license.'" Or like kooky bluesman Captain Beefheart once encouraged a young'un who'd pulled up to his bumper, "Lick off my decals, baby!"—which leaves us wagging our tongues about Eddie Murphy's *Delirious* ice-cream catchphrase: "Want a lick? Psych!"

Found great apartment.

Listening to Wu-Tang Clan at 3 a.m.



Lost great apartment.

Life is what happens while you're listening to music.



MISSY ELLIOTT
Do Me Right
Featuring: Shaggy & Bitch



K-CI & JO JO
It's Real
Featuring: Tell Me It's Real



TYRESE
Take It
Featuring: Safely & Sweet Lady



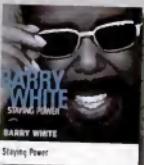
DESTINY'S CHILD
The Writing's On The Wall
Featuring: B'Day, B'Day, B'Day



CHANTE MOORE
She Moves In My House
Featuring: Chaey's Got A Man



702
702
Featuring: Where My Girl's At?



BARRY WHITE
Stayin' Power



TRACIE SPENCER
It's All About You Not About Me
Featuring: I'm Sorry



112
Love You Like I Did
Featuring: 112



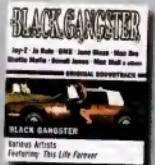
NAUGHTY BY NATURE
Nature's Fury
Featuring: Jambooree



DAVE HOLLISTER
My Favorite Girl
Featuring: Cherie Hynes



ROMEO
Rome
Never Let You Go Away



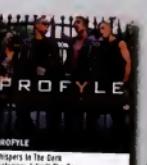
BLACK GANGSTER
This Life
Various Artists
Featuring: This Life Forever



GREMIE
Should I?
Featuring: Beck Bennett



MAC MALL
Mac Mall Presents The Millennium
VOLUME 1



PROFYLE
Whispers In The Dark
Featuring: I Ain't The One

Losing an apartment is a small price to pay for

being able to listen to your music 24-7. And speaking of small prices, check out the great selection of rap & hip-hop at Wherehouse Music. Makes you wonder just how many CDs

you could buy if you didn't have to pay rent.

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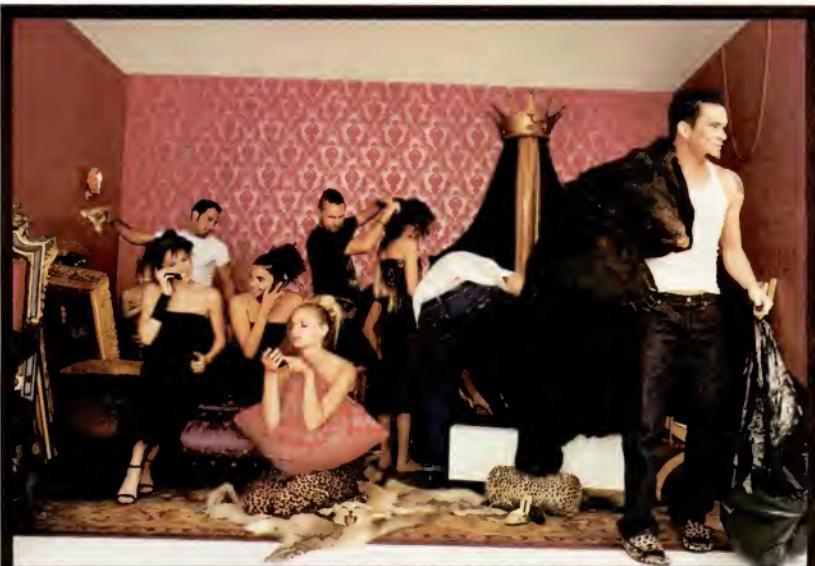


Levi's

A few words of advice from Sugar Ray's
Mark McGrath to this year's MTV Video
Music Awards Best New Artist nominees:
"Enjoy all the trappings that being a hot
music celebrity affords."



Levi's®



"Rental companies are pretty strict about return times."

Watch the Best New Artist Category
sponsored by Levi's® Red Tab™ at
the MTV Video Music Awards on

9|9|99
video music awards

Go to the Levi's Web site to get more information on the MTV Best New Artist Category and enter to win a Gibson™ guitar signed by Sugar Ray.

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INTHEMIX

We Are Family

When it comes to your bro or sis, you'll ride (and die) for them. Even when they get on your last nerve, as only siblings can, you're the only ones entitled to bad-mouth them, because they're fam. No one can sever that bond—not even Ma Dukes or Pops. VIBE spoke with a few of Hollywood's finest and let them tell us about their better halves.

Kenya N. Byrd

1. Anastasia and Tatyana Ali at the 1998 American Music Awards, L.A.'s Shrine Auditorium. **Tatyana:** My grandmother always tells the story of when my mom brought Anastasia home for the first time, and they put her in my arms and I started crying, "Oh my goodness, I have a baby sister!"

2. Mary J. and LaToya Blige at Manhattan's Spy Bar. **Mary:** Me and LaToya are what friends should be. She's my best friend, next to my mother. What I love about her most is her smile and motherly instincts.

3. Sedeck, Wyclef, and Melky Jean, celebrating Wyclef's born-dey at N.Y.C.'s Wilson's Grill & Bar. **Wyclef:** When we were young we were like the black Partridge Family. What I love most about Melky and Sedeck is they speak their minds. **Melky and Sedeck:** The craziest thing we did was follow Clef's tour bus in a beat-up Volvo. When we got to Delaware, we decided not to follow him to Canada, but as soon as he left, that Volvo wouldn't start. It was zero degrees out and all we had was a ill^l blanket [laugh].

4. Montez and Monica Arnold, in style at the 1998 Soul Train Music Awards in Los Angeles. **Montez:** We have the greatest relationship. I love hanging out with her. I remember we played a prank on our stepfather. We stuck tissues in his nose while he was asleep, and he jumped up looking really silly.

5. Lance "Un" and Donelle "Justice" Rivera at Jimmy's Bronx in New York. **Un:** My brother introduced me to the music business. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be where I am today.

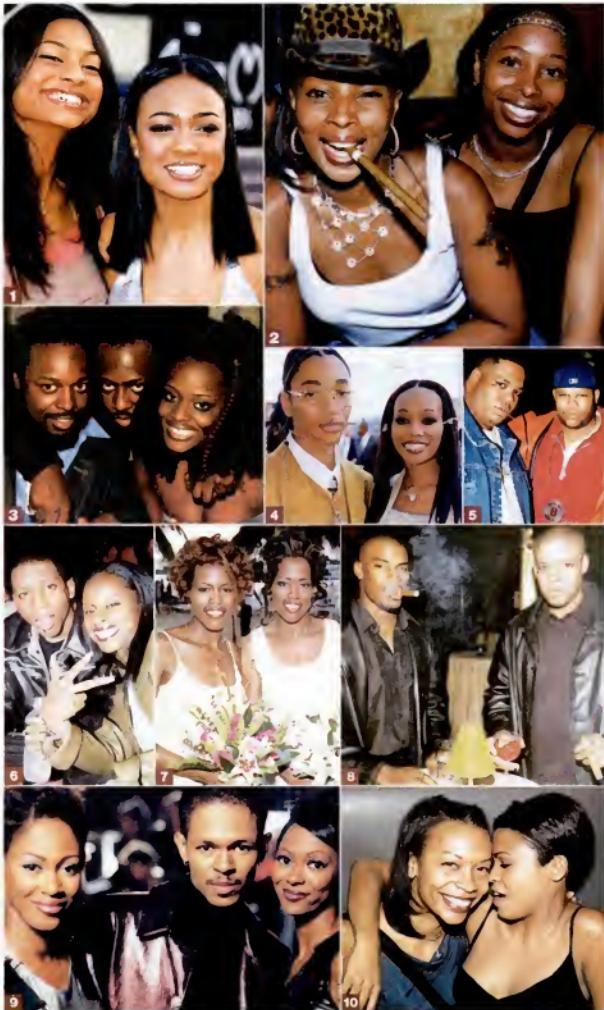
6. Gavin "Pretty Boy" and Inga "Foxy Brown" Merchant backstage at Manhattan's Tunnel nightclub. **Foxy:** We have always had a tight relationship, and he has a dynamic personality. The silliest thing we did was perform in New Orleans with our microphones off.

7. Reina and Regina King at Regina's 1997 wedding in Ocho Rios, Jamaica. **Reina:** We are probably as tune with each other as your typical identical twins, even though we're some years apart.

8. Tyson Beckford and Shontel Rose at N.Y.C.'s Cipriani restaurant. **Tyson:** I just can't live without him. He keeps me grounded. I lost one brother, and I don't want to lose another.

9. Trina, Jesse, and Tamara Powell at a video shoot for Trina and Tamara's single "What'd You Come Here For?" **Trina and Tamara:** The three of us would have lip-synching contests. **Jesse:** One time we took our home camcorder and made our own Cops show. I was the undercover officer who busted my sister with narcotics. Trina and Tamara were very silly on that video.

10. DJmila and Nia Long at Nia's b-day party at N.Y.C.'s Opaline. **Nia:** Smeegie [DJmila] and I didn't meet until we were 13 (we're 11 months apart), and she's been my best friend ever since. People call us Lucy and Ethel, because we always have something going on.



STAR



Winston Box

14 mg. "tar", 1.0 mg. nicotine
av. per cigarette by FTC method.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

No additives in our tobacco
does **NOT** mean a safer cigarette.

She's after my money.

Like I care.

Winston Straight up.

NO ADDITIVES • TRUE TASTE

INTHEMIX2 Baby, You Got Me!



1. LaToya Jackson and Golden State Warrior John Starks were honored at the 30th anniversary of the Mother Hale Awards for Caring benefit held at the Big Apple's Plaza Hotel. Hale House cofounder Dr. Lorraine Hale and talk-show host Queen Latifah were on hand to congratulate the honorees. **2.** Even Hootie ditched his signature hat—and the Blowfish—to celebrate the release of Carlos Santana's new *Supernatural* at Central Park's Boothouse. **3.** Porn star Milder, metallic rapsiter Kid Rock, and a newly sculpted Lil' Kim enjoy the festivities at Miami's Warsaw nightclub.

4. Ally McBeal star Lucy Liu wears those leather hip-huggers well at an after-party for a preview of Fox's fall TV shows at New York's Lincoln Center. **5.** Erykah Badu gives us her best impersonation of a swan. Any sister who can maintain her equilibrium despite that elaborate cocoon wrap is truly gifted. **6.** Knicks bad boy Latrell Sprewell holds it down off the court as he hangs tough with Timbaland at Justin's in N.Y.C. **7.** It's no wonder the guys go loco over voluptuous superstar Jennifer Lopez. The Puerto Rican beauty is a vision in white at her record-

release party at Manhattan's Float. **8.** Lionel Richie still has pull. After his concert at the CapCure Shadow Creek Invitational at Las Vegas's Bellagio Resort, Luciano Pavarotti and Ricky Martin stopped by Richie's dressing room to shoot the breeze. **9.** Trick "Nate" Daddy (left) settles his nerves (with a spliff?) before ripping the stage with J.T., "Who Dat?" Money at Club Cristal in Miami's South Beach. **10.** Beenie Man must be practicing Tae-Bo. Rude boys (left to right) Rayvon, Red Fox, Maxi Priest, and Shaggy exercise their right to chill. K.N.B.

Hear the
one about the
comedian who
never drank
milk?

She had a
weak funny bone.
Lucky for us
lactose-intolerant
folks, there's
lactose-free milk.
It's available
everywhere, and
it has all the calcium
of regular milk.
Good thing. I'm here
to crack you up –
not myself.



got milk?

WHOOP GOLDBERG ©1999 NATIONAL FLUID MILK PROCESSOR PROMOTION BOARD

INTHEMIX3 Yeaah, Baby!



1. President Clinton was only 9 years old when Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on an Alabama bus in 1955. Forty-four years later, the President chats with the first lady of Civil Rights before presenting her with the Congressional Gold Capitol Medal of Honor at the U.S. Capitol. **2.** Faith Evans looks like a woman in love! During her birthday celebration at Manhattan's Metronome, she counts the too-few candles on her cake while her man, Todd Russau, wishes her well. **3.** Whitney Houston is not easily recognized with her Rapunzel-like tresses. She and hubby Bobby Brown were in the house to wish Bad Boy's first lady a happy B-day. **4.** China Chow is no strict salad-eating woman. She

attended the New York screening for *Desert Blue* looking rather famished. **5.** Method Man is always scheming to kill his pretty-boy image. He succeeds with this reenactment of Biz Markie's disgusting 1995 hit "Pickin' Boogers," after leaving the Hard Knock Life tour press conference at N.Y.C.'s China Club. **6.** Even though it was his day, Tito Puente had no qualms showing love to jazz great Lionel Hampton (seated) and flutist Bobbi Humphrey, who came out to celebrate Puente's birthday at Jimmy's Bronx Café. And doesn't Bill Cosby look like he's in complete awe of all three musicians? **7.** Jermaine Dupri is ecstatic about taking home the ASCAP award for Songwriter of the Year.

Bangin' hits like Monica's "The First Night" and Usher's "You Make Me Wanna" make his win well deserved. **8.** Life is good for Les Nubians. Even though their debut, *Princesses Nubianas*, is mostly in French, they've still won over American audiences, especially at the WBLS 107.5 FM after-work showcase at N.Y.C.'s Le Bar Bat. **9.** After Mike Myers's silly sequel *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* raked in mad dough in its opening weekend, he has every reason to walk around screaming Yeaah, baby! at this year's MTV Movie Awards. **10.** Poor lil' froggy! Mase is about to hit him off (literally) at this year's Pediatric AIDS Kids for Kids benefit at Manhattan's Industria Studios. **K.N.B.**

THE SMOOTH GROOVE

||||| THE WORD IS GIN |||||



ENJOY OUR QUALITY RESPONSIBLY

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Gladys Knight, 55 and a legend in her own time, looks good. Chilling in her suite at N.Y.C.'s Ribga Royal Hotel, she's all flushed from playing tennis, rocking skinny braids and bicycle shorts, and getting ready for an evening performance on Broadway in the musical *Smoky Joe's Cafe*, where her solo rendition of "I (Who Have Nothing)" brings down the house nightly. This summer saw the release of *Many Different Roads* (MCA), Knight's first inspirational album, featuring vocals from William Guest and her brother Meradell "Bubba" Knight, two of the three Pips whose classic Motown harmonies formed the backbone of her rise to superstardom. Now in her 50th year in the music business, the Atlanta native, who sang classics like 1970's "If I Were Your Woman" (Soul) and the indispensible 1973 masterpiece "Midnight Train to Georgia" (*Buddah*), still stays crazy current. She loves Babyface and Boyz II Men and offers advice for anyone who's ever tried to succeed at anything.

When I was 2, I was banging on the piano. Been singing since I was 4. On the road with the Pips since I was 8. They helped me to grow up—as much as they knew. Times used to be hard, but they were good. We were just glad to be out there. We weren't makin' no money. We were just singin'. Just happy we were *considered* to be in it. The Pips were protective of me, too much so sometimes. A guy wasn't even allowed to sit with me on the bus. There was one whole seat by myself. I could lay down, but no guy was allowed in the seat with me. I got married at 16 [to Jimmy Newman, my first husband].

START

PIP SPEAK

**Gladys Knight
as told to Danyel Smith**

So, you know, I started dating before that.

When I came up, I had mentors like Sammy Davis Jr. and Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra. We would have sessions with Jackie Wilson and Sam Cooke. We all would critique each other, saying, You could do that a whole lot better if you tried this. We listened and learned from each other. You got people killing each other now, just for trying to get onstage with them! It's a microwave world, and young artists are treating their careers like something in a cardboard box: Heat it up right quick—then ball it up and throw it away.

I'm not saying you have to do it like I did it. Times change, but we have to patch some of the old with some of the new in order to have longevity. Whitney, she's been around awhile because she took some standard music and added a little bit of oomph to it. She could draw on Dionne, she could draw on Aretha—and on Babyface and all the young people happening today. That's why Whitney was able to last, even though she got caught up in a lot of things.

A love song is forever. Gimme a ballad any day. Some of my best solo ballads were songs I reached back and got. "The Way We Were" (*Buddah*, 1975), "Help Me Make It Through the Night" (*Soul*, 1972), "I Will Survive" (*Columbia*, 1981). I went back and got them and did them my way. There is something magical about Babyface, though. If I could, I'd record all his music. Boyz II Men is my favorite group—they sing love songs like they used to be sung. Boyz II Men is pleasing to the ear, and when I hear somebody sing, I see them as well. Their image is mature but sexy. Mysterious but respectful. I don't want to support a group whose pants are all hanging down and every other word is "B" this and "MF" that. There's more to life than that. We came from an era where those four-letter words meant something totally different; you were an A-L-A-D-Y. And that word's completely gone out of our vocabulary. In being a lady, we weren't ignorant. My mom and dad were pretty progressive. My mom talked to us about sex. My mom always told

DOMEPICE

FREESTYLE, NO REHEARSAL



"The Pips were protective of me. A guy wasn't even allowed to sit with me on the bus. There was one whole seat by myself. I could lay down, but no guy was allowed in the seat with me."

me—and I said the same thing to my daughter—the first time you make love, *I will not be there*. So my daughter has to draw on her own inner strengths. Today, folks are almost afraid to teach abstinence. In our time, you were supposed to be married! That doesn't mean that we were abstinent, but the fruit is going to fall only so far from the tree.

"*Midnight Train to Georgia*?" Was in 1973, girl—do you know that? Nineteen seventy-three, '83, '93, '94, '95, '96, '97, '98, '99...that's 26 years I've been singing this song! I love that record, but do you know how hard it is to still be singing a hit record 26 years later? If only [today's young artists] could get back to the time when they were *hungry*. I wish I could go out there and get each one of them by the neck and say, *Do you know?* You're not *only* what your business is, you're not *only* as big as your last record. Young people need to understand that. They are beautiful spirits. They are not just the measure of their money. When you get back to *who you are*, all other things fall into place. □

CHICAGO 19
AUGUST 98

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EVERYTHING You Wanted to Know BEFORE You're Supposed to Know It

Dear readers, please understand that VC only wants to make you happy, so if that means taking time away from our Tae-Bo meditation sessions to dish more nuggets of gossipy goodness, then, word to church (the new way of saying "word is bond" in Harlem), VC shall deliver.

But then VC must get back to prepping for the massive \$4 million **FUBU** Y2G millennium party this Labor Day weekend on the Caribbean island of St. Martin/St. Maarten. (Here's a VC zo-

Question: Why go broke staying in St. Barts with

Daisy Fuentes when you can chill a short boat ride away in St. Maarten, and use the leftover loot for shopping? VC prefers the Dutch side of the island (St. Maarten) to the French side (St. Martin) because our dietitian has banned us from all things *français*—no French fries, dressings, pastries, maniacures, mads, kissing, islands, nothing! But VC hears that those FUBUlosely rich clothing moguls are flying in tons of celebs, such as **Leo, Nas, and Carmen Elektra**, for concerts, jet-skating, massages, etc. And if FUBU CEO **Daymond John** puts VC in a villa next to that hunk-o'-thug-love **Allen Iverson**, then we may have to break the diet rule involving saliva. (Bad VC!) We just hope that FUBU Y2G doesn't turn into the birdbath that the Jazz Festival in Cancún has devolved into. Yuck! Too many Brazilian bikinis and not enough Brazilian bikini waxes...

A golden rule says that what goes up must come down. And a VC

rule adds that what goes down will eventually rise again. Case in point: **Sen. Bob Dole**. (Badger VC!) So everyone's hatin' on **Puff Daddy** nowadays. Puffy's the only man celebrated on the cover of *Essence* last year, then he gets in a spot of trouble and is nowhere to be seen at *Essence*'s annual awards show. And his hoity-toity Hamptons crew has crossed him off their summer soiree lists faster than you can say Sapagowack. VC has thrown our share of Sean John shade (the guy has his hair combed, he deserves it), but we do love underdogs, and after hearing Puff's hot single "P.E. 2000" (featuring Hurricane G) rock **Faith Evans**' birthday party three times in a row, VC's puttin' our money on the Moët mangler, his new album, *Forever*, and Bad Boy Entertainment....

Also, VC hears **Master P** may don a camouflage leotard. Mr. *Uenigh* signed a one-year deal with World Class Wrestling to perform at its Monday Night Nitro shows (TNT) and pay-per-view events. But rap is nothing new for wrestling fans—many WCW and WWF stars yell out hip hop slangs like "Holla if ya hear me!" and there's even a wrestler named **X-Pac** who has NOTORIOUS written on his butt! Who knew the monster-truck crowd had it in 'em?...

Michael Jackson has been watching **Whitney Houston**'s musical rejuvenation and planning his attack. VC hears that Wacko Jacko may soon be backo and that he's enlisted two boy wonders (producer **Rodney Jerkins** and singer **Cisco** from **Dru Hill**) to return him to the pop charts by the end of the year....

Finally, VC is happy to report that the war in Iraq is over, *raq, Queens*, that is. We hear that thanks to New York City DJ and part-time peacemaker **Funkmaster Flex**, **Noreaga** and **Tragedy Khadafi** have settled the beefs in disputes: Trag's "Blood Type" and Nore's "Halfway Thugs—Part 2." They're even talking about working together soon.... But this is all off the record, strictly on the QT, and of course, very hush-hush.

THE HOT LIST

VC isn't just a gossip column, it's a lifestyle. Here's how we're livin':

Hot Trend: Celebration If you can't become a celebrity, then date one. If you can't date one, then wear one. VC's done all three! We love steppin' out with a Master P/Converse sneaker on one foot and a Busta Rhymes



Bushi/GBX boot on the other. It's a look. Then, like Everlast, we keep warm in an Avirex leather bomber. Turns out Avirex is currently wrangling with boxer Roy Jones Jr. about making a special R.J. Jr. jacket! How about a skintight see-through one? Giving out air kisses all day can really



chap VC's lips. Not to mention smooching all that celebrity butt. That's when VC applies some **Missy Elliott Misdeemeanor** lipstick from man to the kiss and glosses it off with some of Ferme Arsenal's Foxy Brown Lip Bomb. Speaking of mouthwatering, VC hears that Mattel will release a **Brandy Barbie** doll next year! But where are the **VC La Perla** girdle sets with special promo mix tapes by DJ **Kay Slay** (*The Queens, N.Y.*), DJ who's been scoring some many exclusives that DJ Clue's getting nervous) that we signed off on? Stay tuned....

The P is free...
to throw a figure-4
leg lock if
he wants to.

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DEREK JETER DOES NOT SUBSCRIBE TO RUNNER'S WORLD.
(HE PICKED IT UP ONCE, IN A DENTIST'S OFFICE, BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT.)





Derek Jeter does run. He runs as part of his training regimen. He may not enjoy it, but he does it. Running is an ethic. Manifested in a shoe.
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lives: New Jersey
likes: Vans, New Balance
Free Press

2001

As we approach the millennium, a wave of Nostradamian forecasts has been preparing us for some pretty gloomy times. But what if all the fatalism is just a bunch of stinkin' thinkin'? What's to happen if we somehow make it through the year 2000 with the world still intact?

Imagine if you will, just for a minute, that a demon-seed computer virus *doesn't* throw our technology-dependent infrastructure into a systemwide meltdown. And let's say that four winged, skull-faced horsemen *don't* alight on the roof of the White House bearing swords of fire. And what if 5 percent of the population *fails* to reveal themselves as shape-changing Martians in cahoots with the Illuminati's council of elders to enslave our planet's human inhabitants? (I'm telling you, though, keep



an eye on that John Tesh.) Perhaps even a nuclear apocalypse could somehow be avoided, if NATO were to refrain from bombing any more Chinese embassies. I know, I know, such a scenario is *highly* unlikely. But just for argument's sake, let's say humankind makes it through the upcoming year. What then? What might the year 2001 hold in store? We all know what's supposedly *next*. But what's *really* next? What's *ne-eb-eh-exi?* And, like, what's next after *that*?

With said question on the table, VIBE set about predicting the future. The following nine pages detail some of the people, places, and things on the verge of changing the world as we know it. That is, if we don't blow it.

A VIBE ODYSSEY

**For
Members
Only**



PHONE SKILLS

Are call-in radio programs tomorrow's Star Search? After five consecutive wins on *Check the Rhyme*, a daily call-in, on-air, freestyle contest on New York's WQHT Hot 97 FM, amateur MC **LADY LUCK** landed a professional record deal. Everyone sounds kinda wack over the phone, but Lady's performance prompted Kevin Liles, president of Def Jam, to call the station and arrange a meeting with the 17-year-old Teaneck, N.J., native.

Of course, white-hot rapper Eminem was also discovered—by the legendary Dr. Dre—after bustin' clever lyrics over the phone on L.A.'s 92.3 FM. Apparently, some record execs don't have to see a potential artist to know he or she's got that special something. "Lady Luck is not just a dope MC," says Liles. "She's got bona fide star personality."



FORWARD THINKING:

"THE DRUG OF THE FUTURE IS
GONNA BE SOME MENTAL SHIT. LIKE
THOSE HEADSETS YOU PUT ON FOR

VIRTUAL REALITY. YOU'RE GONNA HAVE VIRTUAL STIMULATION, I SUSPECT. JUST PUT THIS HEADSET ON. AND YOU'LL GET THE EQUIVA-

LENT STIMULATION DF TWD
BLUNTS."—INSPECTAH DECK
"ALL THE RAPPERS GDNNA BE DN
VIAGRA. BECAUSE THEY GONNA BE

BURNT OUT. WEED AND VIAGRA. LIKE GIN AND JUICE, THEY'RE GDNNA MIX THAT SHIT UP." —SNOOP DOGG

PUT UP YOUR DUKES

Muhammad Ali's daughter Laila Ali is set to follow in her daddy's float-like-a-butterfly footsteps. Yup, she's taking up professional boxing. And with genes like *that*, we think she could be the first woman to go toe-to-toe with a male contender. How about up-and-comer **Zabdiel Judah?**

NAME	Laila Ali	Zabdiel "Super" Judah
AGE	21	21
BORN	Miami Beach	Brooklyn, N.Y.
WEIGHT	170 pounds	140 pounds
HEIGHT	5'10"	5'7"
DIVISION	Middleweight	Junior Welterweight
RECORD	0-0	21-0



Hit Man

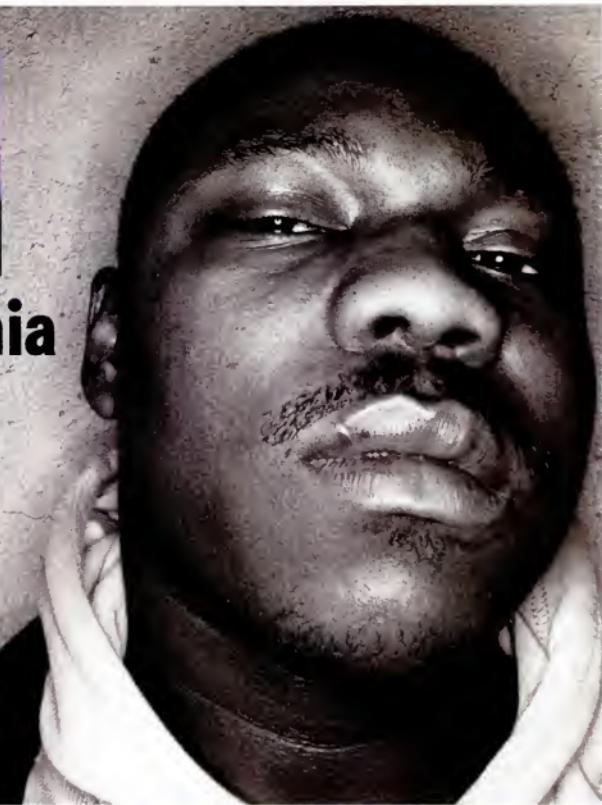
For the first time in his career, undefeated welterweight boxing champ **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** is praying for a big hit to come his way. The just-as-gorgeous-as-Ricky Martin fighter inked a multimillion-dollar recording contract with EMI Latin, which will also allow the "singer" to start his own joint-venture label. Can he actually sing, you ask? De la Hoya's reportedly taking lessons from a big-time vocal coach—but who cares? With millions of fans already on his side, the soon-to-be music mogul will surely knock 'em out the box.





Philadelphia Freedom

New York City. Los Angeles. New Orleans. What's the next hip hop mecca? Until recently, most hip hop fans living outside of Philadelphia associated the City of Brotherly Love with three things: 1.) DJ Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince, 2. seminal gangsta rapper Schoolly D, and 3. those delicious cheese steaks. But thanks in part to the success of the Roots, who achieved long-overdue mainstream success this year with their fourth album, *Things Fall Apart* (MCA), heads nationwide are beginning to recognize the depths of the Illadelphian talent pool. From Charli Baltimore to Eve to Beanie Siegal (right) a spate of hungry young guns are raising Philly's status in the game, and holding the door open for future MC heroes following fast behind.



Get the Digits

The line between rapper and robot is getting blurred. **THE DIGITAL DELINQUENTS**, planet Earth's first virtual pop group, sing, rap, dance—they even exude a trippy sort of sex appeal—and never ask to renegotiate their contract. That's because they exist only on hard drive.

"I needed fresh blood," says Hurby "Luvbug" Azor, former beat master for Salt-N-Pepa. Last year, inspired by the computer-generated dancing baby featured on Fox's *Ally McBeal*, Azor began work on the Delinquents' video "It's Cra-zay" on his NT Workstation. BET and MTV-2 have already jumped on the toe-tappin' track, and an album, *Computer Virus*, is in the works on Azor's Full Circle Records. "The best part is, I don't have to take anybody's mouth," says Azor. "If one of those characters acts up, I just delete 'em."

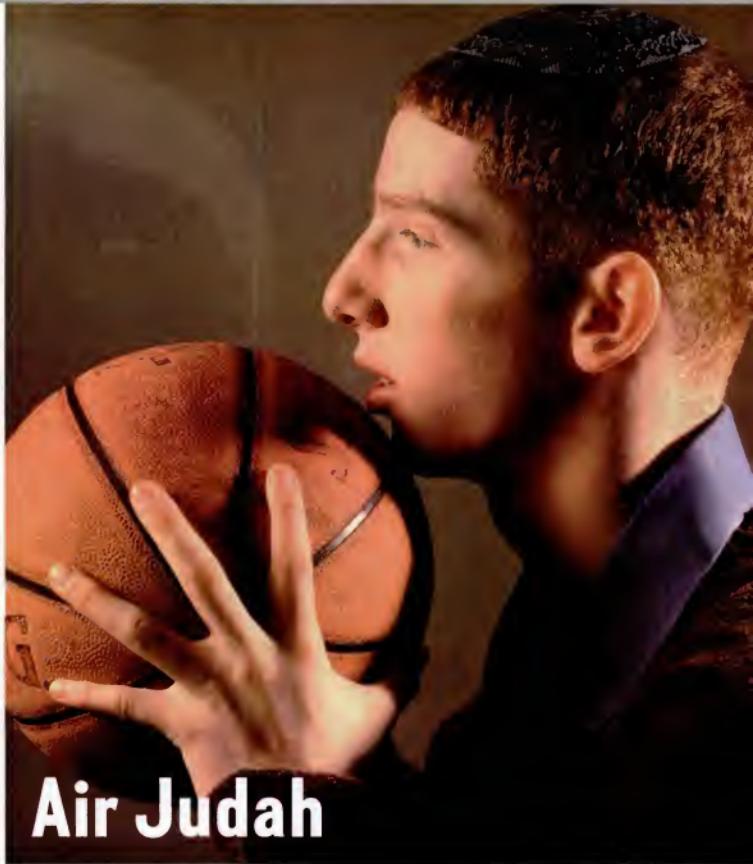
BOO YA!

Okay, you love to shop. But you're an agoraphobic couch potato, hopelessly addicted to the Internet. What to do? Log on to **BOO.COM**. This virtual retailer allows you to buy top-brand clothes from all over the world, 24 hours a day, without ever leaving the comfort of your computer console. They offer exclusive designs and foreign lines unavailable in most "brick-and-mortar" stores, and delivery—guaranteed within five days—is free. Soon, you won't even need your legs!



He's All That

With credits including *I Know What You Did Last Summer* and *She's All That*, FREDIE PRINZE JR. is bona fide box office royalty. Come 2001, we'll probably all know exactly what the 23-year-old son of a '70s sitcom star has been doing every summer, for the past few summers.



Air Judah

Mark Spitz and Sandy Koufax were great, but it's been a while since the slender volume *The Jew in American Sports* has needed revision. That's why the buzz around 6-foot-3-inch, 153-pound **TAMIR GOODMAN** may be a little louder than normal for a high school basketball player. Goodman, a senior at suburban Pikesville, Md.'s tiny Talmudical Academy, is every bit the real deal: Carrying the nickname "Jewish Jordan," he averaged 37 points a game as a junior, consistently dished perfect dimes to awestruck teammates, and earned fea-

ture-size accolades from *Sports Illustrated*, which called his game "enthralling." But it's Goodman's status as an Orthodox Jew that sent a swarm of media players—everyone from *SI* to *60 Minutes*—flying to his door, much to the distress of Talmudical Academy's teachers and rabbis, who found that all the attention had younger students putting adoration of Tamir before Torah.

For his part, Goodman doesn't understand the fuss. "All of a sudden I am some kind of icon," he said to New York's *Daily*

News. "Which is really weird. I'm 17, I don't want to be an icon, I want to be a basketball player." Goodman's refusal to play on the Jewish Sabbath—from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday—could have been a major complication with respect to his desire to compete at the next level, but talent makes its own way. The University of Maryland is holding a scholarship for him, and when Goodman debuts at the national hoops powerhouse in November 2000, it will be with his yarmulke on. And it won't be on a Saturday.



Keep It Rio

Blame it on Ja Rule and friends, frolicking on Ipanema beach in his "Holla Holla" video. RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil is hot, hot, hot—and not just because of its proximity to the equator. During upcoming winters, when it's cold and gray up in the Northern Hemisphere, you're liable to catch a gang of vacationers enjoying a plate of *feijoada* (a spicy black-bean dish) at the plush Sofitel Rio Palace, dabbing their brows, and saying "Abbbb."

FORWARD THINKING:

"INDIVIDUALISM WILL BE ACCEPTED MORE. THE ALLEN IVERSONS WON'T BE LOOKED AT IN SUCH A NEGATIVE

LIGHT. OR THE DENNIS ROOMANS."
—ESPN COMMENTATOR STUART SCOTT ON THE FUTURE OF PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL

"I TRULY BELIEVE THAT AS WE GET INTO MORE AND MORE OF AN ELECTRIC ERA, THERE'S GOING TO BE NO NEED TO GO OUT. I CAN GO TO THE

MOVIES IN MY OWN HOUSE, OR ORDER FOOD OVER THE INTERNET."
—VIOLATOR ENTERTAINMENT CEO, CHRIS LIGHTY



COMIN' BACK HARD AGAIN

As if Starburst Fruit Chews weren't the candy of choice in music studios around the world, as if they weren't the best way to achieve sexy, tangy, kissable breath—the next treat is **STARBURST HARD CANDY**. What?!

After all the millennium melodrama, we're gonna need sumthin' sweet to suck on.



BRAND LOYALTY

We've seen them go from the foreheads of tribal elders to the forearms of grog-drunk pirates to the biceps of fame-drunk NBA stars. Now an ancient art has become a millennial marketing tool: tattoos.

Consider Montana's Black Star Beer company, which gave away a Harley-Davidson motorcycle in a contest seeking the person with the largest Black Star logo tattooed on his or her body. In San Diego, punk band Rocket From the Crypt grant free admission to concertgoers bearing an indelible mark of the group's flaming rocket-ship insignia.

This past spring, San Francisco taqueria Casa Sanchez offered a lifetime of free lunches to anyone willing to get its "Jimmy the Corn Man" emblem permanently emblazoned on his or her skin. Barnaby Williams, proprietor of the local Mom's Body Shop tattoo parlor, branded approximately 30 hungry customers before the restaurant's owners quietly asked him to stop. "[The Corn Man tattoo] snowballed," says Williams. "It kinda got a cool factor. It's not like getting a McDonald's tattoo."

But such a day may not be far off. Williams, 31, says he's already witnessed a number of people turning their flesh into permanent billboards for corporations like Nike and Adidas. In the 21st century, brand identification is *forever*.

PREDICTIONS

Top five albums of 2001

- 1 Left Eye, *Crazy-Crazy-Grey* (Lil' Kim)
- 2 *Haven't We Don't Care* (Play Around With Me (Bad Boy))
- 3 *Missionary Mass, Double Cross: The Gospel Album* (Good Boy)
- 4 *Guy, Thank You, Tiddy: The Guy Riddim Album* (MCA)
- 5 *D'Angelo, Voodoo* (Virgin)

FORWARD THINKING:
"I'M READING EVERY INTERNET MAGAZINE.... THERE'S A LOT OF

SMALLER COMPANIES THAT ARE COMING UP RIGHT NOW THAT I THINK WE SHOULD BE WORRIED

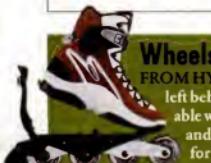
ABOUT. SO WE'RE HIRING EXECUTIVES—NOT JUST EXECUTIVES, BUT INTERNET EXECUTIVES—WHO'RE GONNA SIT RIGHT NEXT TO

THE CEO. THOSE PEOPLE ARE GONNA BE A MAJOR PART OF BUSINESS IN THE YEAR 2000."—DEF JAM PRESIDENT KEVIN LILES



NET WORKS!

Come the year 2G+1, the easiest way to become a star might be via the Internet. Just ask Cindy Margolis and Karin Taylor (above). Simplicity by posting their own provocative pictures on their own self-titled websites, the two ladies have been setting cyberspace records at a (computer) terminal velocity. Margolis, whom you might recognize as a femme-bot from *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*, just broke the world record for downloaded photos, with 60 million (and counting). Taylor, who currently appears on more websites than any human being in the universe, enjoys a whole new type of attention: "It's a different feeling from when people go, 'Wow, you're hot!' That's like, 'Okay, thanks.' But when they go, 'Yeah, I love that site! It's really cool, and I feel like I get my money's worth,' I love that."



Wheels on Fire New IN-LINE SKATES FROM HYPNO fill the void strap-on roller skates left behind. The STS model (\$279) has a removable wheel unit so you can take off the "rollers" and keep stepping. These blades were made for walking...into the future!

Cha Cha Cha
Cha Cha



Don't be surprised if merengue has replaced the electric slide as the favorite party dance at your 2001 family reunion. Check out the moves in recent music videos from rap stars like Busta Rhymes, Puffy, and the Ruff Ryders—everybody's on the babaico. And it's not just the hip hop



PRINCE UPON SCREENS

How do you get your screenplay onto the big screen? Try making the soundtrack first! That's what producer PRINCE PAUL did with *A Prince Among Thieves*, and the calls from movie studios came rolling in. Reportedly, Paul's good buddy Chris Rock is in negotiations to buy the rights to the project, slated to arrive sometime in 2001.

Car-Tunes

Wouldn't you flip if your whip came equipped with your entire CD collection? The EMPIRE CAR PLAYER is set to be the 21st century's Bondi box. Remove the 6" x 7" x 2" device from your dashboard, hook it up to your home computer, and, in a few seconds, download all your MP3 files. It comes in five different models holding up to 476 hours worth of music, all digitally programmable to play in a sequence of your choice. Talk about hittin' switches.



PREDICTIONS

USA Today headlines from 2001

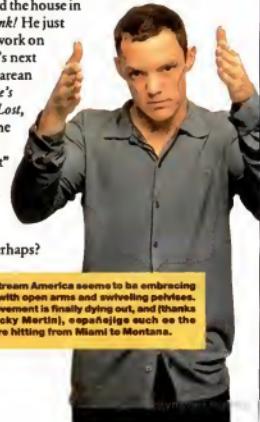
1 Bridge Spanning Grand Canyon Completed. Thank You, Allen Architecht!

2 New Study Finds Cigarettes Healthy. Surgeon General Says, "Smash Up, America!"

3 Disney Braks Unfrozen: Disney to Assume Control Immediately

Here, Lillard Lillard

On-screen, MATTHEW LILLARD is as freaky as can be. The 29-year-old wild man (literally) killed them in *Scream*, was deliciously egomaniacal in *She's All That*, and rocked the house in *S.L.C. Punk!* He just finished work on Miramax's next Shakespearean flick, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and says he has "big top-secret" projects slated for 2001. A mystery circus, perhaps?



community. Mainstream America seems to be embracing Latin dance styles with open arms and swiveling pelvises. The retro swing movement is finally dying out, and (thanks to lead gyror Ricky Martin), *españa* sones such as the rumba and salsa are hitting from Miami to Montana.

CAMEL



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HG Hot Guys

MS Man Stew

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NEXT

Club Monaco, Abercrombie & Fitch, Zara: You're a mail rat with a limited budget, but you can still look like you work at Prada or Ralph Lauren.

FUBU: The 1999 version of Cross Colours and Karl Kani, FUBU alleviated the sweatshirt into a \$100 investment.

Sean John: Same expensive

Sean John
sweatshirts
FUBU, but this time the letters are in script and 3-D.

Versace, Iceberg: Who knew that ghetto-fab hip hoppers and Boca Raton, Fla., retirees would love the same logo-crazy jeans suits?

Helmut Lang, Plain Sud: Slightly less cartoonish, but the outrageous prices are the same.

Adidas, Reebok: How did Frankenstein platforms get so popular for girls? Well, at least they gave the high-priced sneaker companies a little healthy competition.

Sky, Michelle Mason: Seen on Lauryn Hill and Madonna, the new heels still have

height, but they look more sculptural and less orthopedic.

The North Face: Professional mountain-climbing gear keeps urban dwellers warm and is still expensive enough to impress.

Alphanumeric: Finally, clothes you can snow-



board in, then hop over to the club, and still look good.

LOVE AT FIRST BLINK

Not having any luck with the personals or online dating services? Try a **LOVEGETY**, available this September from Borer's Nest. You're a swinging single who's ready to party? Then pick the device's "dance" setting. Other choices include "chat," "movie," "drink," "fun," and "love." The pager-like device beeps and lights up if it's near another 'Gety and blinks if the settings match.



FORWARD THINKING:

"I THINK THE FUTURE WILL CONTINUE TO PROGRESS AND REGRESS SIMULTANEOUSLY. BUT I'M PRAYING [WE DON'T RELIVE] '80S FASHION. PLEASE,

NO CAZALS. NO CUTOFF SWEAT PANTS WITH THE WOOL SOCKS UP TO THE KNEES. THE FLASHDANCE LOOK... PLEASE LEAVE IT ALONE!" —KOOL MOE DEE, ON HOW WE LIKED IT THEN

"I THINK PEOPLE PUT TOO MUCH INTO THAT FUTURISTIC SHIT. IF EVERYBODY GON' WEAR SPACE BOOTS, FUCK IT, I'M PROBABLY STILL GON' BE IN SOME TENTS." —MURDER INC. CEO IRV GOTTLIEB



LOVE JONES

This cat is flawless. **DONELL JONES** is on some post-D'Angelo-Maxwell-kinda-like-Eric Benét stuff—but it works. Signed to LaFace, and exec-produced by Eddie F. (formerly one of Heavy D's Boyz), Jones is mellow and kind of chic, with just enough of that uptown bounce to keep your shoulders rolling. His new album, *Where I Wanna Be*, is the perfect soundtrack for a 21st-century romantic adventure.



PREDICTIONS

Menu at The Mess Hall, No Limit Inc.'s fast-food chain

- 1 Spicy Rice and the Master's Peas
- 2 Mama Mia X's
- 3 Ballerproof Fried Chicken
- 4 Smooth as Silk Yogurt
- 5 Fruity Shaka
- 6 Big 'n' Juicy 'Bout-it Bangz
- 7 Grouph's Hot Diggity Dogg
- 8 Soldier Fries
- 9 Make 'Em Say "Unugh"
- 10 Brain Muffin

One JUST STARTED grad SCHOOL.
One is ON LEAVE from the MARINES.
One is in his SECOND YEAR of residency.
One STARTED his own LABEL.



ALWAYS FRIENDS. ALWAYS COCA-COLA.

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Crank It Up!



FREEREPLAY'S SELF-POWERED AM/FM RADIO, retailing for approximately \$79.95, has a hand-wound spring mechanism that transforms human energy into electricity; it runs for up to an hour off

30 seconds of hand-cranking. Also sporting a sunlight-steakin' solar panel, the radio's surprisingly boomin' sound is perfect for the postapocalypse party—after the power goes out.

LIUIE LIUIE

"I try to represent—even if it's not what people want to see," says **LUCY LIU**, 30, who crushes all memoirs of a geisha as the finger-sucking attorney Ling on *Ally McBeal*.



Having played alongside Tupac in *Gridlock'd*, Liu will soon be expanding her Hollywood horizons—riding with Antonio Banderas in *Play It to the Bone* and kicking ass with Jackie Chan in *Shanghai Noon*.



FORWARD THINKING:

"I HAVEN'T HAD SEX WITH A COMPUTER YET, BUT VIRTUAL SEX MIGHT BE REALLY COOL IN THE FUTURE. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT!"—RUSH

HOUR DIRECTOR BRETT RATHER

"THEY'RE TRYING TO MAKE IT SO THEY CAN REANIMATE THE IMAGES OF OLD MOVIE STARS. THEY WAHNGAT RID OF THE JIM CARREYS OF THE WORLD

BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO PAY THEM \$20 MILLION. BUT IF YOU RESURRECT EDWARD O. ROBINSON, YOU DON'T HAVE TO PAY HIM."—AT&T SALESMAN DAMON WAYANS



New Scrubs

Imagine an Italian blow-dryer painlessly propelling sugar-like crystals across your face, wearing away dead skin. That's **MICRODERMABRASION**, a procedure for removing wrinkles, stretch marks, acne scars, and other imperfections of the dermis. Practiced in Europe for years, microdermabrasion is now FDA-approved for use in the U.S. Unlike those who use chemical peels, patients undergoing this "sandblasting with velvet" see immediate results and have little or no recovery period. A blemish-free 21st century? Microdermamazin!

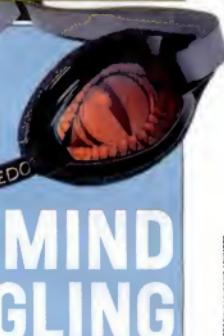


PREDICTIONS 10 things that won't be around in 2001

- 1 Paper 2 'N Sync 3 Butterflop berries
- 4 Mallbeach 5 Plasticine TV shows 6 Coat pants
- 7 Plug-in telephones 8 Cassette tapes 9 Tequila
- 10 Southern California

NOT HALF-STEPPIN'

Having already gone from star pupil of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to principal dancer for the American Ballet Theatre, DESMOND RICHARDSON floored Broadway in '99 with his footloose performance in the musical *Fuse*. Now codirector of the dance company Complexions, Richardson is taking American dance into the future on the good foot.



MIND GOGGLING

Lizard loose in the pool! Well, kind of. Speedo has taken its classic swim goggles and embellished the lenses with three-dimensional holographic images—sharks, skulls, piranhas, and reptile eyes. While **HOLOGRAM GOGGLES** (\$6.99 retail) might not make the next Olympics, they're a hot bet for essential rave accessory of the next millennium.



Top Temps

Initially, NBC didn't recognize the jewel it had with the 1995 miniseries *The Temptations*. But for the five actors who played the legendary Motown troupe—film star LEON (*Waiting to Exhale*) and relative unknowns TERRON BROOKS, D.B. WOODSIDE, CHRISTIAN PAYTON, and CHARLES MALIK WHITFIELD—the movie's success was pure justice. "The network wasn't sure they could make [the film]," says Leon, who portrayed the tormented David Ruffin. "They said there wasn't enough black talent out there that wasn't already on TV." By 2001, this new furious five oughta be picking their spots and calling the shots.



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1 THE VIBE SPOT

From partying players in Chicago, to a bit of style in Philadelphia, and ending with a bang in Detroit, VIBE knows the spot to be...



1. Laurent Martell (l) and Montell Jordan show just the way players play at the Martell Players Suite in Chicago.

2. Kelly Price let's 'em know that a players' suite is nothin' without a diva to make it hot!

3. Joe, Laurent Martell, Montell Jordan, and Michele Martell (l-r) know how to party for real with Martell Cognac, the drink of choice for the evening.

4. Where else but the Bacardi Limón Style Show could these makeover recipients find Malik Yoba (c) and a true sense of style.

5. Malik Yoba (c) takes a minute from enjoying himself at the Bacardi Limón Style Show to pose with (l-r) Karen Williams, Barbara Gee, Robin Gibson, advertising director, and David Watkins, Icon Marketing.

6. Kings and queens of style: (l-r) Carlos Ribas, assistant marketing manager, Bacardi-Martini USA; Cello Romanach, group marketing manager, Bacardi-Martini USA; Nate Morris of Boyz II Men; Malik Yoba; Robin Gibson, advertising director; Fred Jackson, marketing manager; and Gary Lewis, director of business development.

7. Giorgio Armani Parfums and VIBE Magazine hosted a party for Detroit beauty advisors to introduce the new, Emporio Armani for Him and Emporio Armani for Her. Leslie Marino, pictured here, from Giorgio Armani raffles off VIBE and Armani Parfum gift bags.

8. Giorgio Armani's Beth Grogan hits off a guest with an Armani Parfum set.

9. Giorgio Armani's Dick Roderick preps the attendees for a presentation on the new Armani Parfums.

10. Showing much flavor at the VIBEstyle Set Awards (l-r), Carolyn Ellison, senior brand manager of Tanqueray; Gary Lewis, director of business development, Ananda Lewis, host of MTV; and Noel Hankin, v.p. of corporate affairs, Schieffelin & Somerset.

Correction: In the August VIBEspot we identified one of the L'Oréal Féria Contest winners as Tiffany Britt. Her name is Tabitha Britt.

Special thanks: To all the business interns who help make these events as well as day-to-day operations possible: Davonina Brown, James Crowder, Chinina Flowers, Tena Golding, Chavonita Hardin, Ashley Thompson, and Crystal Robinson.

AARON WOMACK

AGE 19 THE JOURNEY BEGINS
WORKS IN COMMUNICATIONS DEPT.
ON BOARD THE USS CORONADO

AGE 23 FORMS BAND—PLAYS IN SINGAPORE
ATTENDS INSTRUCTOR SCHOOL—
DEVELOPS CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING

AGE 26 CERTIFIED AS MASTER TRAINING
SPECIALIST IN ANTI-SUB WARFARE
ATTENDS NAVAL LEADERSHIP SCHOOL
EARNS ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE
IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

AGE 27 THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

[OPERATIONS SPECIALIST, DRUMMER]



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NEXT!

PEOPLE
ON THE
VERGE

SCREWBALL Survival of the fittest

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PIOTR SIKORA
JUNE 11, 1999, QUEENS, NEW YORK

It's already N.Y.C.'s hottest day of the year. And despite the presence of a cold six-pack of Heineken, the temperature inside Screwball's Long Island City, Queens studio, Screw World (not far from the group's Queensbridge housing-project home), is rising. The subject at hand is the rap industry, and it ain't that cool. "Oh, you gotta change your shit"—we always hear that from labels," laments the stocky, scratchy-voiced KL, one fourth of Screwball, the street-gutter New York hip hop savors. "We comin' raw, dog. We ain't trying to change shit."

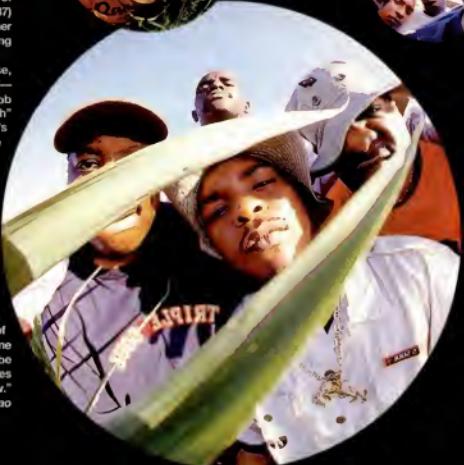
A QB group rounded out by rhyme terrorists Poet, Solo, and Hostyle, these childhood friends, all in their mid- and late 20s, wear their long histories in the rap game like purple hearts. As the duo Kamakaze, KL and Solo (a.k.a. Kyron) have been making noise in the underground with singles like 1997's "Snakes" since their album deal with Warner Bros. went sour in 1994. Poet began his career rapping OB against the attack of BUP's 1987 "The Bridge Is Over" with "Beat You Down" (1987) and later formed the group PHD. All four batters came together in 1994 on PHD's posse burner, "Set It," before officially joining forces on acclaimed indie singles like "Screwed Up" (1996).

If there's any justice in this screwed-up rap universe, Screwball's cataclysmic, rage-filled Tommy Boy debut, Y2K—featuring guest spots from Queensbridge all-stars like Mobb Deep and tracks from DJ Premier, Marley Marl, and "fifth" Screwballer Mike Heron—should obliterate the group's underdog status for good. It is, very simply, an undeniable must-have for anyone who misses the nontrynd, uncompromising, and decidedly unglamorous brand of hip hop the Big Apple was once legendary for.

"[Screwball's] shit is what we need right now in hip hop," enthuses Premier, who produced Y2K's brilliant card-pulling lead single, "F.A.Y.B.A.N. (Fuck All Y'all Bitch Ass Niggas)." "I always respected Poet because he was the only one to stand up to KRS back in 1987. So when Screwball wanted me to work with them, I was definitely with it."

The album's not-inclining crime-rhyme anthems include "Who Shot Rudy," an assassination whodunit involving unpopular New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, to which he responded, "I did not consider it one of the better songs of the year." Some find Screwball favorably reminiscent of nine grimy rap vets out of Staten Island. "You're always gonna be compared to somebody," says Poet, with world-weary eyes that have seen it all. "You heard the Wu. Here comes the Screw."

Chairman Mao





Next

PEOPLE
ON THE
VERGE



GRENIQUE Flyin' high

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES HICKS

The road to fame is paved not only with good intentions, but also with the guts that pay the rent while you wait for the spotlight to shine. Just ask Grenique. Two years ago, the 23-year-old singer moved from her native Maryland to Gotham City and, like many before her, started waiting tables. She toiled at a Manhattan restaurant known for its Sunday open mics and for being a favorite haunt of A&R types. One night, Grenique was serving drinks—and in full view of the people she'd wanted to impress—when being tormented by the manager from hell. "He kept yelling at me," she says. "And I was like, 'Yo, this is my first waitressing job. Take it easy.' And he's like, 'What's the wrong glass?'" Grenique laughs.

brightly and brushes a few curls away from her face as she recounts the story. "I said, 'You know what? You can take this glass and shove it all the way up your ass.' I took off my little waitress thing and said, 'That's it, I didn't come to New York to be a waitress. I came here to pursue my career.' I was determined."

The restaurant industry's loss is music's gain. What Grenique lacks in waitressing skills she makes up for in singing talent—evidenced by her shimmering debut, *Black Butterfly* (Motown), which has already yielded the hit single "Should." Conventionally the songstress (she wrote or cowrote most of the songs on *Butterfly*), "Should" is a fuzzy, bluesy kiss-off

to a bad relationship. Hmmm, love gone sour—a personal experience, perhaps? Grenique laughs. "Naw, not exactly. My friends they live me great songs." Her girls might give her lyrical inspiration, but the glow and that smoky voice come from deep within. Grenique's soul "goes so high, so thin." Her maturation as both an artist and a woman motivated her debut's title. "When I was going through my growing pains, I was like a caterpillar, basically going nowhere. When I moved to New York, I went into my cocoon and started to develop myself and really get into me, all my spirituality and the spirits around me. And how," Grenique says, flashing that smile again, "I'm starting to fly and grow my wings."

Amy Linderman



NICKI

PEOPLE
ON THE
VERGE

CLIPSE Beach party

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN MANNION

You can't deny that in the hip hop game it ain't where you're at, it's where you're from. Virginia Beach, Va.-based duo Clipse understand this just as much as the next MC, but these siblings found themselves in an awkward position after the off-the-hook video for their debut single, "The Funeral," came out in May. "A lot of people thought we were from New Orleans after they saw the video," says Terrence "Terrar" Thornton, chuckling as he downs buffalo shrimp at Mahi Mahi in Virginia Beach. "We just thought that a [party-style] funeral procession would be a perfect theme." Terrar pauses before adding, "And the video wasn't shot in New Orleans, it was shot here."

Technically, Terrar, 22, and Gene "Malice" Thornton, 27, moved from White Plains, N.Y., to Virginia as children. Still, they hope that their home state will finally be recognized as a major part of the South's hip hop renaissance, especially with the release of their extremely banging debut, *Exclusive Audio Footage*, (EastWest/Elektra). "Virginia is South, but now it's not considered the dirty South," says Terrar. "I guess we're too close to New York," Malice chimes in with a laugheristic grin.

Clipse landed their record deal after production team the Neptunes (best known for producing Noreaga's "SuperThug") played Elektra executives a tape of songs that would eventually end up on Clipse's debut. "We played them 'Stick Girl' and 'Got Caught Dealin,'" says Pharrell Williams, one half of the Neptunes. "Malice freestyled it [they] went, 'Wow! The 'The Funeral' track [they] heard that and snapped."

Exclusive Audio Footage signifies the arrival of Virginia's unapologetic street voice. Missy and Timbaland are the state's polished party brokers, and MCs Mad Skillz and Lonnie B. are its highly stylized wordsmiths. Clipse are a punch to outsiders' grills. "You've never heard a hardcore vibe come out of Virginia," says Terrar. "And that's what we represent—Virginia's raw street perspective. Nothing more, nothing less." Just how we like it: nigg and dirty.

Marcus Reeves



TERRAR (left) AND MALICE





CHRISTINA AGUILERA Mind over body

PHOTOGRAPH BY YARIU MILCHAN

Christina Aguilera is biting her nails. Despite her outwardly confident demeanor, the 18-year-old admits to being a nervous wreck. "What if people don't get it? I've worked too hard for everything to unravel because of misconceptions," she says with a deep exhale. Aguilera is referring to "Genie in a Bottle," the smoldering pop shuffler that previews her appealing self-titled debut. Framed by the kind of sticky-sweet chorus that megahits are made of, the tune is punctuated by a breathy, oh-so-suggestive command to "rub me the right way."

"The song is not about sex," she asserts, her lithe figure rising from an overstuffed armchair in the center of her plush New York City hotel suite. "It's about self-respect. The words 'Rub me the right way' are not literal... It's more like 'C'mon, treat me right.'"

Although Aguilera insists she's not a prude, she's extremely sensitive about how she's being marketed—particularly to her peer group. "It's important to me to be a positive role model. Parading around in my bra and a pair of hot pants will not inspire confidence in other girls," the songstress says. "That would just make me one more person pushing them to feel like they have to be something they're not."

The daughter of a military father and a violinist/pianist mother, Aguilera has been preparing for her shot at being a teenage role model since she was 12, when she landed a spot on *The New Mickey Mouse Club*. She appeared on the Orlando, Fla.-based show with such current notables as Britney Spears, J.C. Chasez and Justin Timberlake of 'N Sync, and *Felicity* star Keri Russell. "It was a great way to grow

up," Aguilera says of her *Mickey* days. "I loved being around kids who had the same passions I did." From there, she was picked to sing "Reflection," the theme to Disney's 1998 hit, *Mulan*.

Unfortunately, while striving for her debut disc to be as thought-provoking as it is trendy, Aguilera has been enduring minor fallout from her budding fame back in her hometown of Wexford, Pa. "I just got back from my prom, and it was just awful," she says, her face contorting from a weary smile to a cringe. "The girls just ignored me. They still don't see what I'm really all about, which is kinda sad. But that's why this record's so important," she says. "I'm not just another bimbo... I've got a brain and a heart. And I'm not gonna let my body distract people from that fact."

Larry Flick





silverTab

2 THE VIBE SPOT

What do you get when you combine hot music, wild nights, and a mouse? VIBELIVE! '99, and VIBESpot was there to catch it all...



1. VIBELIVE! was representin' at Pleasure Island at Walt Disney World in Orlando.

2. Columbia Records singing sensation Destiny's Child may sing about someone paying their *Bills, Bills, Bills*, but their smiles are worth millions. They pose after their performance with Junny Hibbert (l), corporate accounts manager, Stacy Harris (c), and Gina McNeil (r), both with Colgate-Palmolive.

3. Derrial Christon (l), brand manager; Fred Trusty (second from left), associate brand manager, Downtown Disney Marketplace; Marian Ensley (third from right), West Coast music sales and marketing director; and Gary Lewis (r), director of business development, take a break from organizing VIBELIVE! to get a shot with Warner Brothers recording artist Eric Benét.

4. After performing two nights at VIBELIVE!, the sexy singing group ideal finally found time to pose for VIBESpot and eventually enjoy themselves.

5. The Lost Boyz made us remember why "Lex Coups, Beemers, and the Benz" was such a hit, as they had the crowd going wild.

6. Coming dressed to impress, VIBELIVE! attendees took a minute to stop by the Colgate-Palmolive Station and receive samples in fly bags provided by Mecca.

7. Cameo are presented with special bottles of Hennessy by Sumindri Peiris (second from left), brand manager, Hennessy; Robin Gibson (far left), advertising director; winners of the

Hennessy-VIBELIVE! contest, and Adrienne Boyer (far right), brand ambassador, Hennessy.

8. Larry Blackman is still making it happen, as Cameo rocked the house and then received the Props Award by Gary Lewis, director of business development, and Danyel Smith, editor-in-chief.

9. The crowd was feelin' VIBELIVE! Make sure you're there next year, and for everyone who came out, THANKS FOR SUPPORTING US !!!



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miss mary mack

**"A Queen with a crown /
Down for whatever..."**
**The almighty matriarch
of hip hop soul gets realer
than real about fans, fear,
and fighting for her life.**
By Danyel Smith

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARC BAPTISTE JUNE 10, 1999
AT SUN STUDIO AND HOTEL W, NEW YORK CITY





t's hard to write this story. It's automatically personal. It's Mary.

Mary's music—1992's auspicious *What's the 411?* (Uptown/MCA), 1993's *What's the 411?* (remix album, Uptown/MCA), 1994's impeccable *My Life* (Uptown/MCA), 1997's expansive *Share My World* (MCA), her surprisingly fluid 1998 live album, *The Tour* (MCA), and now, *Mary* (MCA)—is all crammed with hopelessness and fury. And still there's room for expectancy and desire. Hardcore, dewy-eyed Cinderella fantasies. The kind of loneliness that can't be alleviated by anything except the guy in question. And then, when his presence is not even the real prescription, all you've got is what you believe to be the absolute horror of self. Fun, right? Yes, yes, y'all: Real Love.

This is Mary J. Blige music. And except for within the confines of the bedroom or the barroom, who thinks romantic antics a worthy subject? What boy reading this isn't already bored? What girl isn't already sucking her teeth, boyfriend in tow, sniffing at what is (for her, this month) unnecessary Mary melodrama? Mary J. Blige has already said it was her life, but really it's mine. And yours. And your baby's mama's.

I'm with Mary J. in Manhattan, twice over the course of two weeks in early June 1999.

She grew up in Yonkers, though, a part of New York I've only seen in the winter. It's not pretty. In a housing project called Schlobohm Gardens, named after some long-dead local politico. Mary J. Blige's mom's name is Cora Blige. Mary says Cora always played "Misty Blue." Mary recorded the song herself for her 1998 live album. "My mother played that song every day when we were little," she says. "It brings back memories of when we didn't have a care in the world. We just played all the time."

Things did get blue, though. "I: the projects," Mary says, sitting in a deserted N.Y.C. restaurant, picking at her chicken wings, sipping on her merlot, "you're fightin' every day, fighting for your life. You're gettin' scratched up, you're scratchin' other girls—over nothin'!" My mother always told me, "Fuck people," but I never learned to be like that. [I just learned] you can't please everybody."

Mary remembers the bad in Technicolor. The good things in fuzzy shades of gray. "When I was in school—real young, like elementary—I had a lot of girlfriends," she says. "My friend Michelle was reminding me of back in the day, 'Mary, remember when people used to be mad 'cause they couldn't hang with you? And they used to fight over sittin' next to you?' I said, 'No, I don't remember that!'"

James Green does. The man who taught young Mary seventh-grade social studies still lives in Yonkers. He says that even back then, Mary wasn't ever "Mary."

Green, like everyone, called her "Mary J." At Longfellow Middle School, Mary J. was what most girls dream of being: popular. "She was active," Green says. "Talkative. Mary J. had a flair for wearing clothes and makeup. She worked to make herself attractive. Worked very hard to make people like her." He says Mary J. received a B in his class—and that if she had any differences with her mates, it would have been with Other Ladies. "Mary J. was always outspoken," he says, sounding happy to be asked, "but I wouldn't say aggressive. Very proud of herself. Confident. Mary J. is special. She and her sister."

A few nights before I was with Mary and her sister LaTonya, at Herb Powers' House of Sound.

"You got to accept a man being a man, though. They're always competing with you, no matter what. We gotta work on that."

Mary's pedicured feet faced in silver

Fendi slides. Diamonds round her left ankle. Rings on her fingers, rings on her toes. Mary's got plump arms. Icy-pink fingernails so long she presses phone buttons with the side of her thumb knuckle. Her little brother, Bruce Miller, is helping her figure out which songs should be sped up—or slowed down. LaTonya is Mary's former background singer and current business manager. She looks like a Kinko's copy of Mary J., listens to the phone when it doesn't. LaTonya's got rhinestone stars on her denimish thighs. Rhinestones at her white tank. Red bra straps. Rhinestone clip around her high ponytail. "Mary's in a good place right now," LaTonya Blige-DaCosta says, a week later, from a suite at N.Y.C.'s Riha Royal. Over the line, easily, LaTonya could be Mary J. She says when they were lit-

te, their mom worked a lot. "I had to cook, wash clothes, make sure Mary did her homework," LaTonya says. "It was a lot. I grew up fast." She yawns in a genuinely tired way. "Mary's feeling good about herself. Mary's good is a realistic kind—one that anticipates the bad. Her new album is, as usual, where grime meets gold. Where passion meets platinum.

For example, "No Happy Holidays": "I can't believe / After all this time / I'm in love with a man / Who can never be mine / ... Valentine's came and went / Makes me wonder where your time was spent / Thanksgiving was another lie...." Mary's ad-lips come in like the tide. Soft, sure licks. When she raps, it's death. There's a song, "Not Lookin'," featuring K-Ci Hailey, formerly of Jodeci, owner of a No. 1 pop single this summer, "All My Life," with his brother Joe Hailey. The new Mary/K-Ci duet is about a girl wanting more than just a sex dance. You wouldn't know from the energy that leaps out of the cassette that Mary's manager, Kirk Burrows, played for me in his car last spring, that K-Ci and Mary were never recording in the same studio. As if you didn't know, K-Ci and Mary used to be a couple. You remember their wrenching 1992 duet, "I Don't Want to Do Anything." By all accounts, including Mary's, hers and Hailey's was a tough, strange love.

She alludes to the fact that she's currently dating a producer/singer. "You know who he is," she says. "Or you will know." I understand him to be Malik Pendleton. "I did the rapper thing," Mary J. says at the restaurant. And when she says, "I did the singing motherfucker thing," she could be talking about Case or K-Ci. "And if I do another singer," she says, "it's 'bout who I'm with. He's going to be something that God has broke the mold for. Somebody willing to listen and be cool and be patient and not be egotistical." Mary J. stares at the glossy table, looks back at herself. "You got to accept a man being a man, though," she says. "They're always competing with you, no matter what. That's fucked up. We gotta work on that."

Yep. Work. Music. Let's talk about that. "On the first album, [my favorite song is] 'Love No Limit,'" she says. "'You Remind Me' is my baby. That's my first song ever...you know? I was living in the projects, walking around, and 'Real Love' and 'You Remind Me' were on the radio and I was, like, still in Building One on the third floor. It was a nightmare. I was like, Jesus, please give me some money so I can get out of here. I didn't have no money. People were like, 'You still livin' here?' I didn't have no money for a long time. [In] 1996, that's when I was getting paid for the first time."

"She was making money back then," says

NOT GON' CRY:
"If you ain't comin'
right, don't come at
all. That's what my
aura is saying."

At the Songs
and Visions
concert, 1997



Mary. Mary is always Mary. She just opened her mouth [and sang]."

Those who have come in Mary J. Blige's wake—Lauryn Hill, Monica, Brandy, Kelly Price, Deborah Cox, Erykah Badu—are all talented. Sure. Badu's phrasing is innovative. Cox's, Brandy's, and Monica's voices lend themselves to pop melodies like tonic to vodka. Hill, or her rich *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (Ruffhouse/Colombia, 1998), spits, in some cases, as much anger as Tupac and his cronies did on 1996's "Hit 'Em Up," and then spoons up the kind of gratifying emotional stew you'd find at a Dionne Warwick/Chaka Khan potluck. But Mary, her soaring voice goes flat sometimes. The lyrics—whether she chooses them or writes them—are sometimes basic. The compositions she chooses to sing over are solid, professional, and thoroughly trend-conscious. What happens with Mary J. Blige, the thing that makes her, truly, a queen of soul, is that *everything* comes through her. There is no filter. There are no Brandy/Monica/Mya teenybopperisms (Mary wasn't even a child). There is no Badu-esque humor or super-savvy self-awareness. Of Hill, Mary J. herself says, "She is enlightened. That's how I'm trying to be."

But Mary J.'s on her way there. And she takes us on the journey. She and her voice are *one* thing. Her phrasing and her life are one thing. The occasional flatness, the odd pronunciation of this or that word, the tears onstage, the sweat, the hoarseness, the slight awkwardness of her shows—that's her. And it's us. Learning to play the violin in public! That's real life. Mary's voice—pretty, growly, sexy, sad, emotive, often perfect—is life, too. She sings to all us folk scared to be happy. All up on love every day, afraid to touch it. All of us burnt brittle. Tentative as hummingbirds. Ferocious as beasts of prey. You remember how Mary

Burrows, formerly president of Bad Boy Entertainment. He's been managing Mary J. Blige's career since 1997. "But it was locked up. Mary needed reorganization. I'm working with LaTanya now toward that goal," Mary says. "Right now I'm seeing some real money."

But even back when her recorded "crazy karaoke" version of Anita Baker's 1986 "Caught Up in the Rap-ture" somehow got to Andre Harrell, then president of Uptown, and the label's then A&R director, Sean "Puffy" Combs, Mary J. still was not sure she was the Next Big Thing. And that seventh-grade confidence had, like it does in so many girls as they become women, dissipated. Combs, reached by cell at a video shoot: "Mary was shy. Took her two days to really look at me. Then we hit off." It's what everyone who worked at Uptown says: Mary was "shy." Lewis Tucker, currently vice president of promotions at Universal Records, was part of the original Uptown crew. He says she was "to herself. But working at Uptown, we never took anything for granted." He says people at MCA were not believing in Mary's first album. "Mary was *fib* priority," he says from his office. "I'll never forget that. Fifth behind Patti LaBelle, Stephanie Mills, Eugene Wilde, and someone else I can't remember. Those artists were paying bills for MCA at that time. A lot of people didn't get who Mary was—a female in combat boots and a tennis skirt. They thought she should dress up."

Harrell and Puffy didn't. They wanted her to be her, which was fine with Mary J. It's all she knew how to be. "It took time for her to feel comfortable letting you know who she was, though," says Harrell. "She was overwhelmed by the whirlwind energy of Uptown. In awe of the possibilities. Didn't believe it would happen. She didn't know her gift would be so important." Combs says, "Mary was naturally



At the
Billboard
Awards,
1999

At the
American
Music
Awards in
Los Angeles,
1995

blew it out on "My Life": "Keep your head to the sky / I don't need to tell you why." And she doesn't.

Instead she sings about love and betrayal and pain you only talk about through tears or clenched teeth. Mary is about the specific girl-type emotion girls think boys find acculturated. The kinds of tender vulnerabilities hidden behind kids and jobs and the zeal to make shit keep going. Mary sings about the literal and figurative blows that make a strong girl buckle, a weak girl broken. A pitiful girl addicted or dead. Keep your head to the sky, indeed.

"Not that I was addicted to drugs or anything like that," she says. And she's real clear. Real matter-of-fact. "I smoked weed, and I drank drinks—I snuffed coke. I was *doing it*. I was havin' fun with the shit! But



Mary onstage at
Madison Square
Garden, 1993

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when I got a little older and I started doing it again when I was 22, that shit almost drove me crazy. Now I know I'm accountable for what I know. And I had a crazy revelation: That shit was going to kill me. It was killing my voice. [At] photo shoots, people'd be wondering, "Why she keep her glasses on?" Because I was fucked up every day, that's why!"

Mary got past it. "By *My Life*," Harrell says, "she began to believe [in herself]. She realized she didn't have to be afraid." But Mary says she was still having issues. "When I wrote *My Life*—that album! That shit was a straight relationship-abuse album. And it was not only abusive in the way of a man; I was abusing myself with drugs and other shit. I was depressed and couldn't handle what was given to me: success. I didn't know how to handle it, and I didn't know how to handle a man [who] was...I had to walk on the same tour with [that] person. And this man brings me some pictures...there was women everywhere, all around, women in the dressing room, women [backstage], and then the after-parties, and there was women on the bus. [I was like,] 'I have lost my mind? Because I was in love by myself?' But now, I'm not setting myself up for the big break—the letdown. I'm livin' my life for what it is." Then she adds, like she's knocking on wood, "[But] it could happen again. It could definitely happen again."

What could happen again? And then I'm like, "Your career was giving you all this drama?" She says, "It was a number of things. My career, my relationship took a toll on me. But it made me stronger." She pauses, looks for meaning in the chicken bones. "I'm a little meaner in my relationships now. I'm not nice at all. I'm nice, but I'm smart now. I just think a woman should never...me, everything I've been through...I'm not scared, it's just that I know what I got to do."

I wonder who is the badass cat who steps to Mary on some *Can I get wif your shit?* "It used to happen back in the day," she says. "But for some reason, my aura [now] speaks loudly. Says, *Get the fuck away. If you ain't comin' right, don't come.* That's what my aura is sayin'. Men don't even approach me like that. They approach me like, 'How you doin', Mary, it's nice to meet you. I love your work.'"

I ask her about being an influential woman. A woman of purpose. And what it's like with guys. "You just never know who it's going to be," she says. "You know in your heart who you want it to be. You want him to be smart, strong but sensitive at the same time. I'm with someone....Maybe [he's] all those things. But...you just never know, because everybody needs work. I need work." She's got stuff to say. "I found out that this relationship I brought a lot of baggage, and so did my partner. You find yourself living in the past, going through the same shit again. And then you finally snap out of it and know that you deserve more and announce to the world, 'My happiness is due! Give it to me, or leave me alone!'"

Mary is talking, and while in some short moments I almost wish with Chucky Thompson, one of Puffy's Hitmen, were there to slide in a slick-ass beat, I'm looking at her and she's not Mary. Blige. She's talking and she's still a recording star but—however comy this sounds—she's a chick licking blue cheese dressing off a chicken wing, talking about the kinds of brothers we both know. Brothers we all know. Getting at the kind of

complicated male-female shit that makes sense in theory, but for which there is no answer in actual life.

"These are some of the most proud, the most talented guys, and I look at them like, *What? Why are you on my fuckin' sneaker, here?* Get off my foot! Don't be mad at me because I'm not mad because I didn't win a hundred Grammys! That's not what I'm here for. I'm here to accept what God gives me at the moment," says Mary. I say (and this is where we are, this is the kind of stuff coming out of my mouth now), *The thing is that if you don't act like you're all that, then they're mad because you didn't act like that.* And Mary says, "But you know what? They're not mad because you didn't act that way, they're mad because they're not you, period. They're mad because..." And I'm all finishing her sentence—they would do it differently.

And Mary says, "They wouldn't do shit but be scared just like they are. It's always [they] could do it better. Well, do it! Let me see you do it better. And then they get mad when you don't get

**"You finally
snap out of it and
know that you deserve
more and announce to
the world, 'My
happiness is due! Give
it to me, or leave
me alone!'"**

mad. Let me see you do it better. Let me see you bring home 10 awards. Do it. I'd be happy for you. But don't shut me down and push me down and flush me down the toilet and kill my self-esteem just because you right now are having a hard time with who you are." And I'm like, *Goddamn.*

The first single on the new album is called "All That". Can Say." Lauryln Hill wrote and produced. The song is very *Songs in the Key of Life*. Very vibrant and optimistic. Rather like the Emotions' 1977 "Best of My Love." I can already hear the dance remix in my head.

In Herb Powers's House of Sound, there are loads of Coke cans. Arizona tea bottles. Waxy paper cups with plastic caps and straws. Yeasty dinner rolls wrapped in foil. Mary talks about her "Sincerity" with Nas and DMX. Says it's hardcore—for the real Mary fans—the B side on the single. Talks about the "Mad/Sad" section of the album, which includes "Don't Waste Your Time"—a duet with Aretha Franklin—as well as "Your Child" and "No Happy Holidays."

Now we hear a song called "Beautiful One." Sounds like it's gonna be Prince-y, but it's not. "This is kinda happy," Mary says. She's enveloped in a plush

chair, listening hard. "But the music's kinda sad." The song's produced by Chucky Thompson and Rich Harrison. I'll run into him a few nights later at a fundraiser for some guy running for mayor of New York. He says the stories of Mary's "bad attitude" have been misleading. "At that time, she was a young black woman in a record company dominated by men. A lot of what she was going through was growing pains." Andre Harrell also acknowledges the dramas of being a female artist at almost any label: "Girls socialize differently," he says. "Guys...they bond at a nightclub, a party. Chase women, play hoops. With a female artist, a lot of things are more cerebral, conversational.... [Male execs have to] do things [with female artists] over lunch, over dinner. It's a more controlled environment. Takes more time to find a comfort zone."

Hank Shocklee walks into Powers's studio. In another life he was a part of the team that created Public Enemy's sound. Which is to say he helped change the face of hip hop. He's a big-time exec at MCA now. Still rocking sneakers and big shirts. Still looks like he's 25 years old. Looks like he's happy because Mary's happy. He says as much. The best song on *Mary* is "Your Child." *Girlfriend/Waxn't dis-respectful/Infact she's a hundred percent sb.* Two women's torture. Song is a masterpiece. Right up there with 1997's "Seven Days" and the Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds-produced track "Not Gon' Cry," from the 1995 soundtrack for *Waiting to Exhale* (Arista). Of Mary, Edmonds says, "Mary's strength as an artist is the pure pain that comes out of her vocals. It's the emotion. She has it unlike anyone else."

Every time Mary curses, she apologizes. She's trying to stop. "I don't like my speaking voice at all," she says. "If I go back and listen to this tape, I'm not going to like it." She also says, "The only time I really, really like my singing voice is when I enter this place, it's called...it's just a feeling, a spot where I'm not trying. Shit is just happening."

At the restaurant, Mary and I are finishing up. The merlot is drying at the bottom of the glass, the fries are cold. The tape recorder needs batteries. "You get your overall fans," says Mary J. She's talking about touring. "But there's always, like, two really wicked people in the front, and one night I was like, I don't really feel like doing this shit—and it sounded like I just didn't want to do it. But when I looked out and saw my fans, they felt something was wrong with me." Mary is wearing no makeup. Her driver's waiting at the bar. The black Benz is crouched outside. Autographs have been signed. A girl handed Mary a poem, even. LaTonya Blige-DaCosta will say to me on the phone days later, "If I had magical powers, I would give Mary anything she wants. Mary gives everything away, and no one gives her anything. If she wanted to be an angel, I would make her one if I could."

Mary puts her purse on her shoulder. "When I finally realized how much they missed me," Mary says, "I just started giving them everything. I went into that place and...I can't even explain. Once you understand what this [voice] is for...this is for me, and this is for them. They paid their money. I can't just dismiss them like that. It always pays to enter that place. I can't explain what it is, but it's a spot you can't do no wrong in." □

Additional reporting by Brent Fason

SO THIS IS THE STYLE ISSUE.

(FUNNY, IT'S NEVER BEEN
AN ISSUE WITH US.)



STEP UP. YOUR DRINK IS WAITING.

Rodney Jerkins
isn't all smoke
and mirrors.



RODNEY "DARKCHILD" JERKINS
is the man. Music producer supreme. Oh, you
don't think so? Ask Jennifer Lopez, Brandy,
Monica, Whitney Houston, Joe, Puff Daddy, the
Spice Girls, LeAnn Rimes, Lionel Richie, Jean-
Marie Horvat, Sony Entertainment, LaShawn
Daniels, Harvey Mason Jr., Mary J. Blige, Gina
Thompson, Total, Michael Jackson, his older
brother Fred—and our man *Chairman Mao*.

The Cut Creator

PHOTOGRAPHED BY NICOLE ROSENTHAL MAY 21, 1999, LOS ANGELES

REVENGE OF DA NERDS

The Neptunes

"Chad Hugo (left),
Pharrell 'Magnum' Williams



When we first came out, a lot of record companies didn't understand what we were trying to do," says Pharrell Williams, one half of the Virginia-bred production tandem the Neptunes. Williams and his soft-spoken partner, Chad Hugo, create some of the most innovative tracks in hip hop and R&B. Discovered by Teddy Riley during his "Rumpshaker" days, the bugged-out dynamic duo have blown up like Tae-Bo on the strength of two of 1997's biggest hits: Mase's smooth-as-a-baby's-bottom "Lookin' at Me" and Noreaga's explosive "Superthug."

The "Superthug" track was a middle finger to everyone who ever doubted us," says Williams. "We're all about pioneering different sounds and taking this music in different directions. You can totally rock out to that track." These former junior high school band mates have come a long way. Nowadays, their cellular phones ring supreme from bloodthirsty label reps anxious to cop some of the Neptunes' next-level sounds.

"When we decide to work with an artist, we take into account where they want to go and how focused they are. Sometimes ego makes an artist and it's a good thing, but other times ego can really get in the way," says Williams. He's rather excited about the crew's recent work with Sean "Puffy" Combs and Ol' Dirty Bastard, and a reunion with Noreaga. But aside from helping other artists bleed their wells with precious-metal plagues, the Neptunes are collecting more checks than Colonel Sanders in two separate production deals—one with Elektra Entertainment, the other with Virgin Records.

What's next? A group called N.E.R.D. (Nothing Ever Really Dies)—a.k.a. the Neptunes themselves as rappers. The duo promises even more sounds that will challenge radio-heads across the board. Says Williams: "Whenever you hear a track and you're like, 'Damn that shit is out there but hokey—that's us.' Hete them now.

Elliott Wilson

"The studio's my house, B. This is my domain."

Seated behind his trusty musical accomplice, an Akai MPC-3000 sampler/drum machine, at Record One recording facility in sleepy suburban Sherman Oaks, Calif., the hefty production talent known as Rodney "Darkchild" Jenkins is comfortably casual in a charcoal gray FUBU T-shirt, matching sweats, and white kicks. Any producer holed up in his favorite lab will tell you: There's no place like a home away from home. But when guests set foot in this digitized, state-of-the-art dwelling, they've got to adhere to their host's rules—even if he's only three years out of his teens.

"My sessions are clean," the 22-year-old production wunderkind says, half warning, half boasting. And despite the resonant melodies and lush, sweeping musical environments Jenkins has made his calling card, he's not talking sonics but etiquette. "You're not gonna find no smoking in my sessions. You're not gonna find no drinking in my sessions. You ain't even gonna find no cussing in my sessions. You gotta respect my standards, or I don't wanna work with you."

The payoff from this straight-and-narrow path toward chart domination is healthy dividends. For starters, there's the Benetton-flavored potpourri of pop-life icons—Puff Daddy, the Spice Girls, LeAnn Rimes, even soul survivor Lionel Richie—who've got next in Jenkins's overloaded work schedule. Secondly, Jenkins recently became the youngest person ever to secure his own major-label deal, with Sony's pickup of his new Darkchild imprint. And lastly, for the past month the New Jersey native and members of his Darkchild Records production team—older brother and songwriter/producer Fred Jenkins, songwriter LaShawn Daniels, and producer Harvey Mason Jr. (son of the prolific '70s session drummer)—have literally adopted a round-the-clock work routine at Record One to perfect their hit-making magic for their highest-profile client yet: embattled tabloid fixture and global superstar Michael Jackson.

The Gloved One is out of town, so a frenetic pace has gotten even more frenetic in order to make sounds ripe for his return. While Jenkins builds tracks in one studio and Mason generates new sound effects via the ProTools computer program in another, Fred Jenkins and Daniels bounce lyrical, melodic, and conceptual ideas off of each other in another room, passing a writing pad back and forth.

"I think my main role is just making a record into the best record possible," Rodney Jenkins smashes. "Go in the studio, produce it, cut vocals. Some producers don't even know how to do tracks. You got producers who don't know how to play piano. But that doesn't mean nothing,' 'cuz he's still a producer," he says. "Bottom line, end of the day he knows

Jenkins recently became the youngest person ever to secure his own major-label deal.

Such strict professional guidelines might seem old-fashioned by hip hop generation criteria. But with a production résumé that has exploded in the past two years through a series of massive R&B—cum—pop hits for Mary J. Blige (1997's "I Can Love You," "Can't Get You Off My Mind"), Jon (1997's "Don't Wanna Be a Player"), Brandy and Monica (1998's ubiquitous "The Boy Is Mine" and their respective solo smashes, "Top of the World" and "Angel of Mine"), Whitney Houston (1998's "It's Not Right, but It's Okay"), and Jennifer Lopez ("If You Had My Love"), this clean-living son of a preacher man can call the shots any way he likes, uh, darn well pleases.

how to get in there and make sure the song comes out right." But production work can be draining. There are even a few beds in a far wing of the ranch-style complex that serve as a makeshift crash pad when fatigue sets in. But Jenkins doesn't get much shut-eye. "That's why we're foolin' people," he says. "While they're partayin', we're in the studio."

"Sleeping? Here?!" exclaims Jenkins's mix engineer of two years, Jean-Marie Horvat. "That's secondary. We're lucky if we're sleeping! This guy don't sleep! Give him 15 minutes [of sleep], and he's up for three days!"

"We're trying to do something that's never been done before," Jenkins says of his creations with the former—and perhaps future—King of Pop. "[Michael] just wants [what we do] to sound totally different from whatever he hears on the radio. Hopefully when it comes out and it's a done people [will] just say, 'That's just Michael Jackson's sound.'

"A lot of people don't know it, but he's very much in tune with what's going on [musically]," says Rodney of M.J. as he turns to the MPC. "He called me and told me how he loved the Eminem record and asked me what I thought about it."

Jacko jocking Slim Shady? Before I can process the concept (or, for that matter, the possible future collaborations—"The Girl on Mushrooms Is Mine," maybe?), the studio's three doorway-size woofers blast a thunderous horn-staccatoed rhythm replete with hurricane-like flourishes that suggest James Brown's "Super Bad" hyperspinning into the 21st century. Although this song's still a work in progress, the funky-as-commotion's got ample oomph to beckon Fred (seven years Rodney's senior and boasting a fullback's frame) from the next room, his neck jerking to the music in appreciation. As a *wboos* comes whipping through the speakers, Rodney pantomimes the effect with his hand. Then he stops the track just as suddenly as it began.

"That would be hot comin' into a verse," the maestro says. "You saved that yet?" Fred interjects, ever the practical thinker. Losing your song to a power surge is an occupational hazard of the modern producer. But Rodney shakes his head negative.

"Save that," big brother advises cautiously. "The machine will crash if it gets too hot."

"If the machine gets too hot?" Rodney asks with a wicked grin. "Or the track?"

Back before Rodney Jerkins took up residence in the studio, Pomona, N.J.—a community outside the Trumpey up blackjack tables and geriatric-packed boardwalk of Atlantic City—was the place he called home. The youngest of four kids of Sylvia and the Rev. Fred Jenkins (who oversees Rodney's career today as his manager), Rodney's early introduction to music, like that of his older siblings, came by way of a family tradition. "When I turned 5," he says, while waiting on his lunch from Mickey D's to be delivered, "my father said, 'You can't live in this house unless you play piano.' That's a rule we grew up with. I took classical piano lessons for eight years." Rodney also picked up the drums and wound up behind the skins (alongside Fred on piano) at his

"I had, like, 10 Guy tapes,"
Jenkins remembers. "I had to keep buying it over, because every time [my mother] would find it she'd throw it away."

father's Evangelical Fellowship Church. With Moms filling the role of choir director, gospel music dominated the Jenkins household. This despite the kindest natural gravitation toward the popular sounds of the day.

"I remember my brother got in trouble for having 'Sexual Healing' by Marvin Gaye," says Rodney. "I would sneak Guy tapes all the time. I think I had, like, 10 Guy tapes. I had to keep buying it over, because every time [my mother] would find it she'd throw it away. But after we got older, they didn't stop [us] from listening to [secular] music."

The year is 1991. A 13-year-old Rodney is just living for Guy's new R&B testament, *The Future* (MCA, 1990). At that point, he realized that

OUTTA HERE

William Orbit



The Orbman

Basking in the post-Grammy glow of Madonna's 1998 banger, *Rey of Light* (Maverick/Warner Bros.), which he coproduced and cowrote, William Orbit has seen his stock rise dramatically. But few realize that this English producer/artist has been around for a while, always keeping one foot in the underground and the other firmly planted up the erse of the mainstream. His remixes for the Artist Formerly Known as Prince (1990's "Betdecide," "The Future," and "Electric Chair"), Sting (1985's "If You Love Somebody Sat Them Free"), Patti Gabriel (1992's "Digging in the Dirt," among others), and most recently, Brit-pop fave Blur, for whom he remixed last year's "Bustin' + Dronin'" and produced their newest epic, 13 (Virgin), have earned Orbit international acclaim. But it is his own experimental work—for example, that on the Strange Cargo album series—that has created a cult following for this self-described "low-profile studio recluse."

But if the world were to crumble into itsy-bitsy grains of intergalactic space dust tomorrow, Orbit—who has always flirted around the edges of British dance and ambient culture—would be remembered as the guy who delivered electronics to big mama Madonna. Utilizing such techniques as the sped-up breakbeats of drum 'n' bass, the sculpted, atmospheric noise of ambient music, and the echo-and-reverb-drenched heedlessness of dub, Orbit took an aging pop diva famous for constantly reinventing herself and made her once again palatable to new and changing times. The union could not have been better—the album rocked up heavy asales as well as a Grammy. Recognize: There isn't a star in the galaxy of music William Orbit can't touch.

S.H. Fernando Jr.

REAL DEAL

Soulshock & Karlin



Soulshock (left), Karlin

In England, they have a really hardcore black crowd, and here I am, a white kid from Denmark, daydreaming for the Jungle Brothers!" says Carsten "Soulshock" Schack of the 1989 Native Tongues tour experience that launched his career. Soon enough, the starstruck teenager befriended Queen Latifah, who commissioned him to remix her 1989 "Wrath of My Madness."

"I owe so much to Latifah," says Soulshock. "When I was questioning whether I could do this—being a white kid in hip hop—she sat me down and told me to just concentrate on the music." Inspired by the Queen's words, Soulshock hooked up with keyboardist Kenneth Karlin and moved to California in 1992. Their mission: to perfectly meld R&B and hip hop.

The sweet smell of success was in the air. S&K linked up with Patti LaBelle for "All Right Now," from her Grammy-nominated 1992 album, *Burnin'* (MCA). Then bells really started to ring. The duo produced joints like CeCe Peniston's 1994 "I'm in the Mood," Toni Braxton's 1996 "I Love Me Some Him," and Monica's No. 1 1995 hit "Before You Walk Out of My Life." Although they're currently riding the success of Whitney Houston's 1999 smash "Heartbreak Hotel," the S&K connection's love train don't stop: Up next are 702, Mary J. Blige, and, they hope, onetime teen sensation Tracie Spencer.

"Capitol called us to do a song, and when they played us her album, we were like, 'We don't think so,'" Soulshock says. "It was really pop. So we had a meeting with Tracie, and she came up in her jeep bumping Wu-Tang Clan. I was like, 'What are you doing with this album, if [hip hop] is the music you like?' So we did her whole album [over] and made it edgy." Stay real, fellas. We like the realness.

Elliott Wilson

making music was to be his career. And after much pleading, Papa Jenkins was convinced to buy him an MPC-60—Akai's premier piece of studio hardware at the time (or as Rodney says of its status then, "the Bentley of samplers"). The following year, Rodney had already put his prized purchase to good use, working with his brother on *Blessed*, a gospel album performed by their uncle Charles. Rodney also dropped his own solo gospel album, *On the Move*, on Fred's label, Jenkins Music Entertainment.

"I was doing demos for a lot of local people when Rodney was real young," Fred says. "He would be like, 'Yo, let me see what you're doing.' Then I would leave and come back and see that stuff was different from the way it was when I left." Rodney's tinkering has obviously paid off. "It's funny to look back at old childhood videos and see the stuff that took place back then. Rodney was always the little entertainer of the family. We would be out in Disney World or whatever, and he'd be a little showstopper, always grabbing attention."

But it was a demo that a teenage Rodney produced for a local R&B group that caught the ear of his biggest musical hero, production auteur Teddy Riley, who was in Atlantic City attending the Impact Super Summit (a yearly convention for radio programmers and music-industry types). While Riley wasn't feeling the group, he was impressed by the tracks. When word got back to Rodney of his hero's kudos, the excited teen convinced his dad to drive him down to Riley's Virginia studio the following Saturday for an unscheduled meeting.

"We didn't know if we were gonna see Teddy or not," Rodney says, laughing. "We went to his studio and he wasn't there, so we sat in the parking lot [and waited]. When he finally pulled up, I jumped out and rushed up to his car. His bodyguard scooped me right up like, 'Hey, kid, where you think you're going?' I'm like, 'I just gotta meet Teddy! I just gotta shake his hand!' Teddy's like, 'Let him come over.' I said, 'Teddy, I got this DAT I want you to hear!' He said, 'Come on in,' like, so cool, so down-to-earth. Took me in the studio and I played 13 joints for him, back-to-back. And he was like, 'Whoa!'"

Yet when Rodney turned 16, he elected not to accept an offer from Riley to become a staff producer with the Blackstreet leader's New Jack Swing Productions. A year later, after scoring his first hits as Sean "Puffy" Combs's

coproducer on remixes for Gina Thompson's 1996's "The Things That You Do" and Total's 1996 "No One Else," Jenkins would also decline an invitation to join Combs's thriving Hittmen production crew. "[Both times, I had] a gut feeling that was like, You don't gotta tag along with somebody. Prove to everybody that you can do it by yourself," says Jenkins, who now possesses a fleet of luxury whips, including a peacock-blue Bentley Azure and a Bentley Arnage. "Why I gotta be part of a crew when I could start my own crew?" I said. "I don't know if I'll fail or succeed, but I wanna [try to] build my own empire."

This willingness to stay out from under the wings of his colleagues surely aided in the maturation and development of Jenkins's sound. The name "Darkchild" reflects his affinity for melancholy melodies backed by

The name "Darkchild" reflects Jenkins's affinity for melancholy melodies backed by rhythms that remain proudly street.

rhythms that remain proudly street (à la many of Riley's own productions). The stylistic traits can be heard throughout his work, from the achingly lovely strings of Mary J. Blige's "I Can Love You" to the graceful chimes of Brandy's 1998's "Angel in Disguise" to the haunting, unmistakable harp line that opens Jenkins's first No. 1 pop smash and his signature song, Brandy and Monica's Grammy-winning "dueling-divas duet," "The Boy Is Mine." "That's everybody's favorite part," he says of the song's opening riff. "I played it on a harp-sounding keyboard and I remember when I first did it, I said, 'When we get in the club and these girls come on, females will know there goes their little ghetto anthem.'" Which brings us to one curious

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AIN'T NO SWISS MISS

Swizz Beatz

Swizz-Nizz



It's no wonder that 20-year-old Swizz Beatz (e.k.a. Kassem Dean), the percussive punch behind DMX and the Ruff Ryders camp, has quickly made a name for himself in the world of rap. After all, he had the best of both worlds—growing up in the Boogie Down Bronx, N.Y., home of the block parties and MC battles that created hip hop, then attending high school in the South's rap mecca, Atlanta. "That's where I picked up the bounce," says Swizz, whose bumping tracks are known for their frenetic polyrhythms and scorching hooks.

Swizz first got heads open with the track "All for the Love" on the Lox's 1998 *Money, Power & Respect* (Bed Boy). Following the platinum success of his top dewg, DMX, whose 1997 "Ruff Ryders Anthem" he cowrote, Swizz has gone on to work with Busta Rhymes (1998's "Just Give It to Me Raw"), Norajah (on the forthcoming "What, What 2000"), and recently one of his childhood idols, L.L. Cool J. "When I was sitting in the room writing with L.L., that's when it kinda hit me," says Swizz of his newfound success. "Wow, I used to have all his records and now I'm writing a track with him." The as-yet-untilted tune should see light on Uncle L's new album. Swizz is also not mad about a recent collaboration he did with Jay-Z and Mary J. Blige for her upcoming album. And we, of course, cannot forget his latest triumph: the platinum-selling *Ruff Ryders Ryde or Die Vol. 1* (Ruff Ryders/Interscope, 1999). Save for two cuts, it's an all-Swizz-produced comp, featuring head-nodding MCs like Juvenile, Jigga, Jermaine Dupri, and all of the usual Ruff Ryders suspects, including newcomers Eva and Drag-On. Not bad for a cat who says it only takes him 10 minutes to produce a track.

In the meantime, Swizz is perfecting his chops on his equipment of choice—the MPC drum machine and a keyboard—while churning out futuristically fat jams for the next millennium. "I got libraries of beats," says Swizz, "but I'm only letting 'em out when the time is right." Y2K just may be the right time. If we're all still here, that is. S.H.F. Jr.

commonality among Jenkins's most successful work: the proliferation of female artists who have embraced it. "It just happened that way, man," Rodney says with a shrug and a smile. "I didn't plan it. For real, man. It's weird. People are always biggin' it up, and I'm like, It just happened. You do one diva and the next diva calls."

"He's young, creative, energetic, and open to different ideas," says teenage R&B diva Monica of the Jenkins touch. "It's a refreshing, innovative sound, and he keeps new ideas coming."

Ultimately, Jenkins's skills and high standards for in-studio etiquette aren't the only compatible components Darkchild offers the fairer sex. As the lyricists who collaborate with every artist they work with, Fred and 21-year-old Newark native Daniels have displayed a knack for writing the songs that make the young girls sing—and laugh and cry.

"Shawn's writing songs that 40-year-old men write," says Fred. "I've been through a lot as far as relationships," the stocky, baby-faced Daniels wistfully sighs while sprawled on a couch in the R&R room. "I can count on one hand how many relationships I've had—"—but it takes about five hands to count how many dramas he's had! Fred chides.

"I owe it all to my baby's mother," Daniels confesses. "If it wasn't for her, we wouldn't have half of these songs. It's just like in the first and second verses of the Whitney song 'It's Not Right, but It's Okay.' That's true! That's real-life stories right there." He thinks for a moment, then lets out another exasperated breath. "Now I can see someone tryin' to hook up with my baby's mother so they can become a songwriter," he laughs.

The next day, back at Record One, Jenkins and crew are still chugging along, still dressed in the same gear 30 hours after their "workday" began. Sipping a glass of orange juice, Jenkins is beginning to show some signs of fatigue as he mutters, "I did four more joints," then something about heading back to the nearby Beverly Hills crib he keeps while working our West.

But not before another creative impulse hits him. Triggering a stutter-stop rhythm-in-progress on the MPC, Jenkins's hands land on his Trinity keyboard and fluidly flesh their prodigious, classically trained chops. Playing a series of minor-key melody lines, he shuts his eyes in concentration. At

such moments it becomes easy—save for the iced-down DC medallion around his neck—to imagine Jenkins keeping it spiritual in the band back at his father's church.

Ironically enough, it's these two worlds—the industry's floss factor for shiny things and the unswaying canon of his faith—that collide when I ask him which songs besides Darkchild's he's feeling these days. "The Nas joint 'Hate Me Now,'" he answers—in spite of the video controversy that has embroiled his friend and colleague Sean "Puffy" Combs.

"Me and Puff is cool," Jenkins says unequivocally of the Bad Boy imparisario. But of Puffy's now censored crucifixion scene in the clip he says, "But I'll tell him in a heartbeat, 'You

"I make goals to win Grammys and all that," says Jenkins. "But the ultimate goal is to make it into heaven."

cannot mimic God. That's the first commandment. You can't mimic God. You can't get on the cross.' [Puff] knows he did wrong. But all we can do is just pray for him that he'll just ask for forgiveness and don't do it again.

"The main thing you have to know," he continues, as he finally prepares to call it a day, "is that you can't do anything without God. I don't care what people believe. I know for a fact that without God, it's impossible. So I try to do everything, but I try to keep God first. He's the executive producer of all my projects, everything I do.

"People don't know what they're missing. You can have all the money in the world, the hottest cars, the hottest houses, you could be the chief of this, the executive of this, but if you don't got your spirit right, there's always gonna be a little bit of emptiness inside. I make goals to win Grammys and all that. But I still believe the ultimate goal is to make it into heaven." And wouldn't some Darkchild harps make for a celestial-ass soundtrack? □

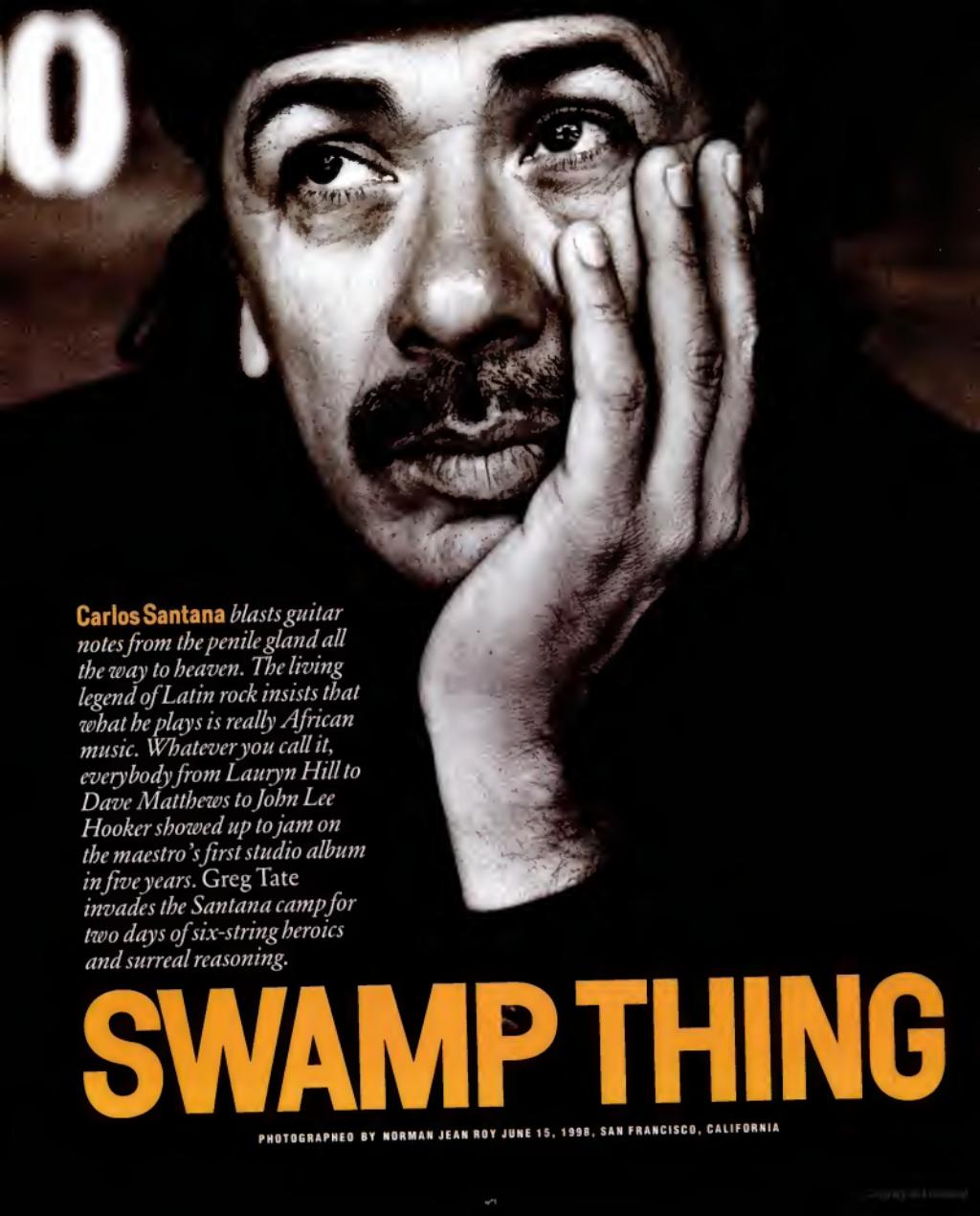
A woman with dark, curly hair is shown from the chest up. She is wearing a light blue, ribbed, sleeveless top. She is holding a clear plastic bottle of Pepsi with both hands, positioned in front of her. A clear straw is inserted into the bottle and she is drinking from it. Her gaze is directed towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus blue.

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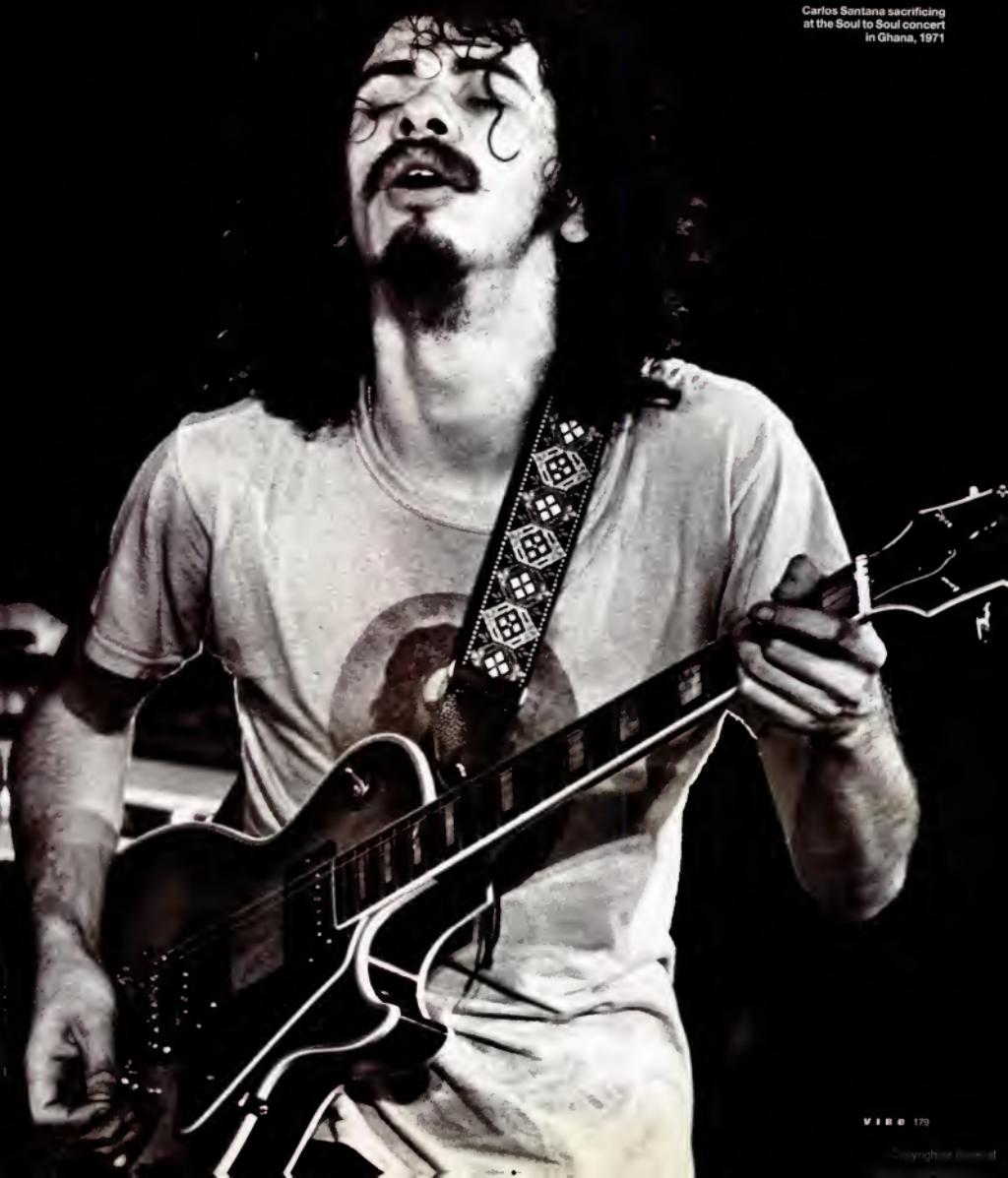


Carlos Santana blasts guitar notes from the penile gland all the way to heaven. The living legend of Latin rock insists that what he plays is really African music. Whatever you call it, everybody from Lauryn Hill to Dave Matthews to John Lee Hooker showed up to jam on the maestro's first studio album in five years. Greg Tate invades the Santana camp for two days of six-string heroics and surreal reasoning.

SWAMP THING

PHOTOGRAPHED BY NORMAN JEAN ROY JUNE 15, 1998, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Carlos Santana sacrificing
at the Soul to Soul concert
in Ghana, 1971



The first time I heard Santana's music I was somewhere between dreaming and waking. You know the deal: big old house, kids tucked up in the attic, parents partying in the basement, gorgeously phony and melodious sounds filtering into your semiconscious mind without knocking. So you wake up the next morn and look among the beer cans and cigarette butts for the album cover that seems to match your sonic hallucination. In this instance it was Santana's *Abreaxas* (Columbia, 1970). Hands down one of the top-five album covers of all time, its painting features a bare-breasted black Madonna, sans child, laying in repose beneath a hovering red-skinned, blue-tattooed, angel-winged devil woman with a conga drum locked between her thighs. The music inside was just as lush, mysterious, sexy, and enveloping.

Carlos Santana's journey into sound became the soundtrack to my life back in the early '70s. From what I gather, he was an important beacon for Vernon Reid and the Artist as well. Santana was The Man in terms of bridging all schools of music.

Some of you young 'uns may not have heard him until Lauryn Hill's 1998 "To Zion" came spinning through your Discman headphones, or seen him until he took the stage with Hill at this year's Grammys. But if you've been listening to radiowaves that aren't formatted strictly for blazin' hip hop

you're Spanish. Uh-uh. I play African music, whether it's from Jamaica or Tupelo, Miss., or from Cuba or Brazil. It's all African music, and if you put a map of Africa next to the United States and showed what rhythms came from where, then it would all be clear."

Carlos Santana has a way of making you see the big picture. As he puts it, "Being truly hip is really a matter of

next century. His new album, *Supernatural* (Anista), finds Santana, who turned 52 this July, working with Lauryn Hill, Wyclef Jean, Dave Matthews, Everlast, and his old buddies Eric Clapton and John Lee Hooker.

Santana clearly believes that his

music should travel on a universal frequency: "Like I told my sister Lauryn Hill, it's not a coincidence that

OOH LA LA LA : "It was incredible just to see him play," says Wyclef Jean.



awareness, man. Back in the '50s, you could call me a spick or a greaser, but please don't call me a square. That was the worst—a cardinal sin. It wasn't so much about color as the way people cared for themselves. Frank Sinatra was not a square, so it's not about smoking grass

you're No. 1 in schools all over the world, because the message you bring is unity and dignity and healing—all the vibrations and resonance that need to be heard in the 'hood, the ghettos all over the world."

My conversation with Carlos San-

sound is as natural for his body as breathing. Everything you hear on the records—the virtuosity and the tone and the passion—is there, plus something else you need to be close up to truly feel and be humbled by: his apparent effortlessness.

His earliest musical memories involve his violinist father being the darlin' of the small Mexican town Autlán, where Santana spent his early childhood. "My dad had that charisma. He was passionate about going after people with his violin and sneaking in certain licks to get a giggle out of them," he says. Naturally, his father started him out on violin before the family moved to San Francisco in the early '60s. But violin lost out to guitar when Carlos heard his first live blues band play, in the middle of Tijuana. "The way the sound bounced from the amplifiers to the cars was supernatural, like seeing a flying saucer," he recalls. "The hairs on my arm stood up like I was touching an electric cat." That charge is still there today.

Since young Carlos's first gig was in a Tijuana strip club, you might wonder how he came to make the distinction between music for the planet and the penile gland. "I learned how to phrase certain melodies in a way that would make women react," he says. "If you play music in church, you can enchant people to go deeper. If you play in a strip joint, you can get women's nipples hard. Music can not only tame the beast, it can arouse the beast, and from this I've learned that the sensual and the

"BACK IN THE '50S, YOU COULD CALL ME A SPICK OR A GREASER, BUT PLEASE DON'T CALL ME A SQUARE."

and R&B, then you've likely heard Santana classics like "Evil Ways" (1969), "Black Magic Woman," or "Oye Como Va" (1970).

His band truly had something for everybody: ripe melodies and low-down grooves for your rhythm-and-blues people, steel guitar for the metal-heads, congas and timbales for lovers of Afro-Cuban dance and jazz. That's the elusive beauty of Santana, the band: It can be whatever your musical prejudices need it to be without compromising its intrinsic mission or vision.

"There's really no such thing as Latin or Spanish music when it comes to this music," says Carlos Santana. "That's white people who put a hat on you and put some maracas in your hand and said, 'Behold, you're Latin—or

or being black. I mean, Elvis Presley took drugs and he was still a square, know what I'm saying? A hipster is a deep person, like Bob Marley, someone who has a passion for the highest good on the planet. A square only thinks of his penis or his ego."

Formed in 1966 as the Santana Blues Band, the group's big break came in 1969 at Woodstock. In the famous documentary film of the festival, their acid-fueled rendition of "Soul Sacrifice" still stands out next to stellar performances by Sly & the Family Stone, the Who, and Jimi Hendrix. As the '70s unfolded, Carlos Santana became one of the few giants of Woodstock who remained healthy, current, and progressive. And the brother should continue catching wreck well into the

tana took place in the conference room of the unassuming Marin County, Calif., premise that serves as the band's business office and rehearsal space. On-site is a well-organized library of memorabilia and a guest house known as the church that's spilling over with antique musical gear: prototypes of now classic amplifiers like the Mesa Boogie, derailed P.A. systems, and dreadlocked bundles of cable.

Beyond the business office lies the Santana band's rehearsal space, where I spent a breezy June afternoon on a couch watching Carlos conduct and solo no more than five feet away from me. Seeing him rip line after line, sigh after sigh, cry after organic cry from his Paul Reed Smith custom-designed guitar, I realized that the production of that

spiritual are really one. All people say 'Oh my God' when they come because they can't say 'Oh me.'"

The creation of the Santana band coincided nicely with the countercultural revolution of the '60s that made mainstream America go tilt. Coming straight out of San Fran's funky Mission District, the original Santana band was right in the epicenter of this momentous transformation of consciousness. "You'd go to Fillmore West and hear Ray Charles, Coltrane, Hendrix, and things just went into warp speed. Every day they'd flash Vietnam on television, and three times a week you'd see a cat pour gasoline over his

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body. How many times could you see things like that, and the Black Panthers and King and the Kennedys being shot, and not be transformed?"

One major factor in this transformation was LSD, about which Carlos's opinion is as far from Just Say No as anyone's this side of Cypress Hill. "Some people may not agree with me, but I think mescaline, mushrooms, acid, and psilocybin will jump-start you from being a turtle on this planet to being an eagle. If you're not into the right intentions and the right motives, don't take it. But if you have a passion to complement life, it's like the music of Sun Ra—a rapture and a splendor. Do it under supervision and you'll feel how Jordan feels when he goes into that zone and scores 600 points. Hendrix and Coltrane would not have played so multidimensionally if they hadn't taken acid. It's not for everybody, but I bet if you put some of this medicine in the prisons, along with meditation, there wouldn't be so many brothers in there with so much hate."

Even before their first album, Santana was a headliner and featured act at the Fillmore West—thanks to rising superpromoter Bill Graham—flexing their young muscles opposite Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, and Miles Davis. This youthful collective of blacks, whites, and browns seemed like the poster children for multiculturalism.



BLACK MAGIC MAN:
"I miss Miles terribly,"
says Carlos. "Inwardly,
he's always there."
(The Savoy, N.Y.C., 1981)

radio listeners and even band members; Rolie and second guitarist Neal Schon went off to form Journey. The next two decades found Santana globally in demand as a concert band but only occasionally popping up on radio.

Now signed to Arista—under the auspices of the same Clive Davis who got the band their first deal with Columbia—Carlos is intent on reaching the masses again via the FM band. "About five years ago, my wife, Deborah, and I were getting inner signals that we needed to hook back up

he really did a Hank Aaron on it. He totally beat out Babe Ruth, hit the grand slam. It's got class, dignity, funkiness, a great relevance of message, and a seriously supreme hook. I saw him do it right in front of me. It was like watching somebody manifest something from nothing."

Which is one way of describing how Clapton ended up on the album too. "The day after we played the Grammys," Santana says, "he called our office. I told him I'd like to just sit in a room with him. You bring some songs

said that song is what he heard after he came back from wherever you go when you go to the other room. It's about the same thing as the song with Eric. He says, 'There's a monster under my bed but there's an angel with his hand on my head telling me it's going to be all right.' Dave Matthews also just came up with these lyrics about God and the devil walking arm-in-arm, and I didn't tell him anything either."

As Bob Marley once sang, there's a natural mystic blowing through the air. "I feel very incidental, because I just show up and things are happening already," says Santana. "All I bring are the three things I learned from Miles and B.B. and Muddy Waters: sincerity, simplicity, and soulfulness. You take care of those, and sensuality and spirituality are just gonna fall right in."

And even as he mixes it up with artists who represent the future of music, Santana keeps hearing the voices from the past. "I miss Miles and Bill Graham terribly," he says. "Inwardly, they're both always there. Throughout this recording process I feel them in my dreams, coaching me, telling me, 'Don't let 'em box you in. If you don't bear it, let 'em know. Walk gracefully. Understand that there's control freaks and there's sweet noddles, and don't be either one—walk through it.' These instructions are really freaky. It's all inner stuff, but all I have to do is be quiet and all the right things happen."

"MESCALINE, MUSHROOMS, AND ACID WILL JUMP-START YOU FROM BEING A TURTLE TO BEING AN EAGLE."

At the time of their 1969 Columbia debut, Santana, the squad included the supple bass of David Brown, the thunderous timbale, conga, and cowbell assault of Mike Carabello and Jose Chepito Areas, jazz savvy Michael Shrieve drumming his heart out, and the gruff but seductive vocals of organist Gregg Rolie. Then there was that guitar player—a cat whose mackadoons blend of high-voltage crackle, rock 'n' roll snap, and flamenco pop put every player in the world on notice that a new sheriff was in town.

But unlike most artists who find a formula and run it into the ground, Carlos—being a musician first and a rock star second—recognized a need to expand his horizon in the form of 1972's *Carnavalera!* (Columbia). This album laid out his aspiration to follow in the footsteps of Coltrane, Miles, and John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra. In this effort to grow, Carlos lost pop-

with Mr. Clive Davis, because he knows how to get the right melodies and songs and lyrics. We bring what we bring and he brings what he brings so that we can get back onto the airwaves."

To that end, Carlos has been on a creative tear for the past year, joining forces with all-star collaborators. "Clive gave us the call," says Wyckoff Jean, "and I'm a big fan of Carlos Santana. I wrote the song right there in the studio. People that are legends, you just gotta go in with them and vibe. It was incredible just to see him play the guitar. I sat back and absorbed everything."

"I have a lot of admiration for Wyckoff," says Santana. "The force is really with him and Laurn right now. When either of them walks into a room, you can feel it before they start playing. They are legends, you just gotta go in with them and vibe. It was incredible just to see him play the guitar. I sat back and absorbed everything."

"I have a lot of admiration for Wyckoff," says Santana. "The force is really with him and Laurn right now. When either of them walks into a room, you can feel it before they start playing. They are legends, you just gotta go in with them and vibe. It was incredible just to see him play the guitar. I sat back and absorbed everything."

and I'll bring what I have, and we'll do something. I told him, 'Let's milk the cow together' and he said, 'That's a good choice of words.'

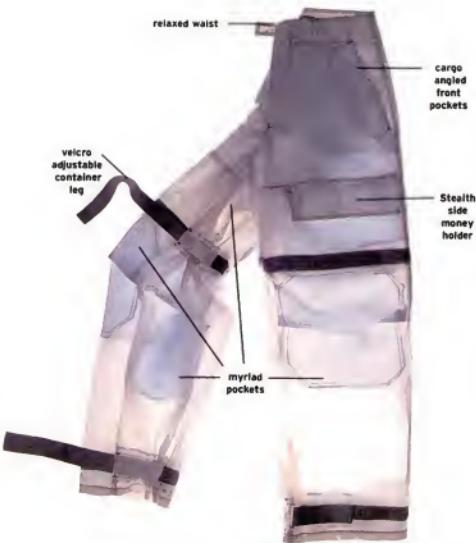
"We did this song I call 'The Choral,' he continues. "It's really funky. I'm learning a lot from the hip hop guys like Wyckoff and Everlast about looping a really fat groove and putting a swamp thing on it. Like B.B. King used to say, 'We're going to take it to the alley,' and John Lee Hooker would say, 'Forget the alley. Let's just go to the swamp.' What we're playing with Eric is real swampy, with a hip hop beat and a gospel choir," he says, "but I can definitely hear John Lee Hooker, because it's got that thing where you see snakes slithering in a soulful way."

That's the way *Supernatural* has seemed all along—a record of destiny. "The song Everlast wrote is the first song God gave him after he had that open-heart operation," Santana notes. "He

Unity is a major word in Santana's vocabulary, one that figures heavily into his musical philosophy and humanitarian values. As much as he's revered as our last mystic-hippie, Third World rock star, he's also one of the few people of substance and stature around who seem to embody the principles of democratic inclusion that the '60s were ultimately about.

"A lot of people are angry and fearful and resentful, and those things are cancerous, know what I mean? What turns me out in music is when it becomes like the moment at the Olympics after all the games are played and all the flags are like a river of colors." He's feeling it now, as he sums up the image. "You can't tell one from the other, you just see people laughing and crying and dancing. Those are the songs we need to hear now. Ones where you're honored as a human being first and foremost." □

IT'S A
WRAP

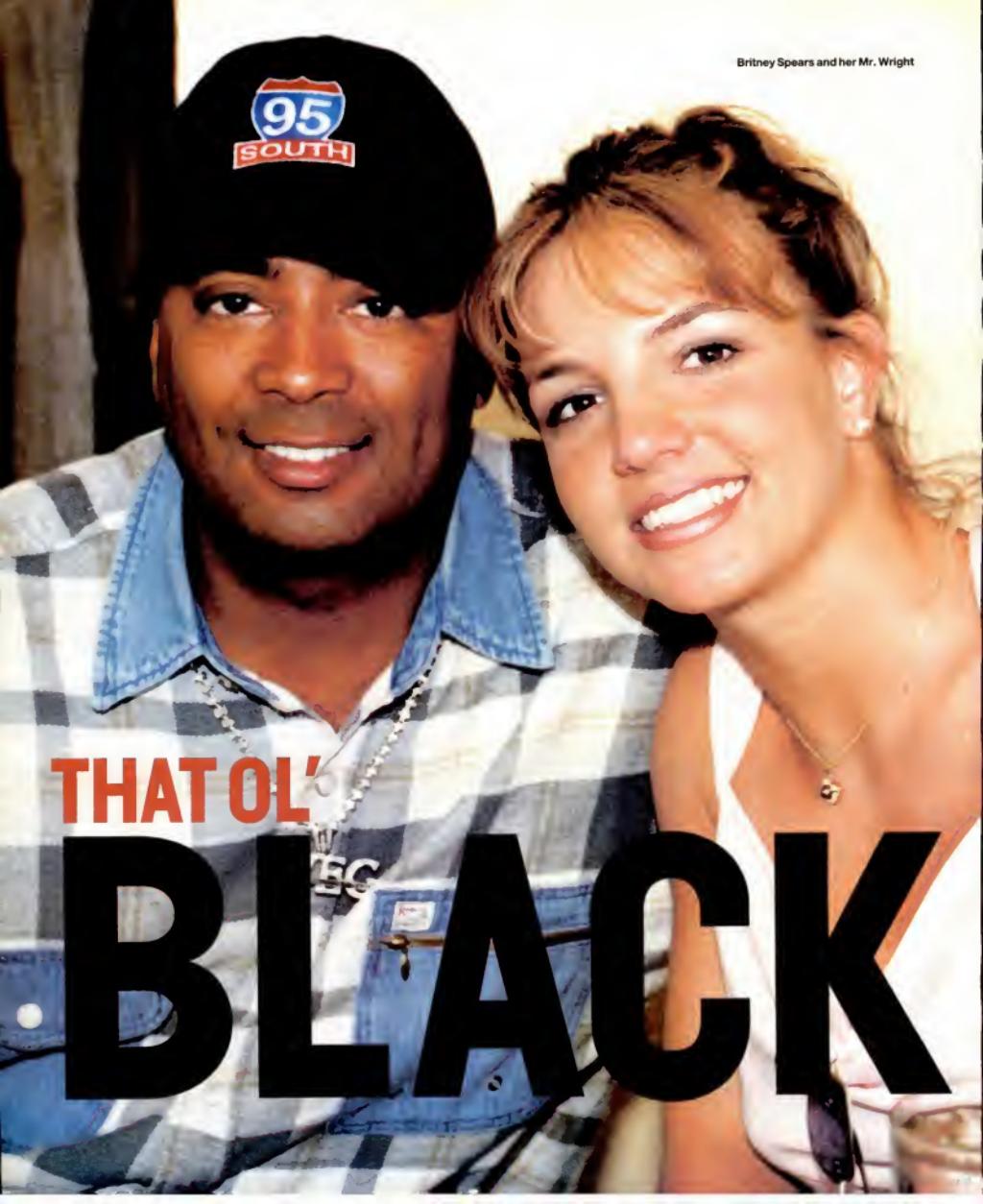


MARITHÉ
FRANÇOIS
GIRBAUD

i n s i d e

212 563 0761

Britney Spears and her Mr. Wright



THAT OL'
BLACK

It's no secret that the billion-dollar careers of **New Kids on the Block**, **Backstreet Boys**, and **'N Sync** were built on the sound of black soul. But there's more to the white teen-pop explosion than meets the eye. **A close-knit network of black producers, managers, songwriters, and record execs have harnessed the power of honky harmony**, shattering sales records and shaking up the music-biz power structure—and just possibly saving the youth of America. *Rob Kenner tracks down the invisible men behind the bubblegum bonanza.*



Bowlegged Lou with super-duper 'N Sync



Full Force's (from left) Bowlegged Lou, Baby Gerry, and Paul Anthony with Backstreet Boys

MAGIC

"Everybody's curious," says Johnny Wright. "They ask me, 'What do you do?' And I say, 'I just clean the bus.' That's a nice job," they say. "You get to meet the guys, right? I'm like, 'Yeah.'"

Sometimes anonymity has its advantages. "It's not about me, it's about the act," says the manager who helped transform Backstreet Boys, Britney Spears, and 'N Sync from 11 goofy adolescents into three of the most powerful acts in the history of pop. "When you're out there all the time, you're a target." Crunchberry-size hailstones pelt his immaculate new Range Rover as he steers along the four-lane highway that connects the four theme parks and 16 resorts that make up Walt Disney World Resorts.

Is it the sweatshirt? Perhaps the complexion? "I'm not the manager of a white pop group," he adds with a wry grin. "It just can't be." If it's easier for folks to believe that the mild-mannered 39-year-old black power broker is a security guard or bus cleaner, then so be it. "Everyone always thinks I'm an older white guy," he says. "I don't have a problem with that."

Even Spears was confused back when she first joined 'N Sync's 1998 tour as an opening act. "I had no idea who he was," says the 17-year-old starlet as a gas-powered go-cart zips her through the maze of tunnels beneath the Magic Kingdom. "He was really down-to-earth. [When] I realized who he was later, I was like, 'Oh my God, that's so cool.'"

Spears has just flown in from Monaco to shoot a few numbers for a Disney special. She's been spending a lot of time in Orlando, Fla., since the release of her quadruple-platinum album, ...Baby One More Time (Jive, 1999). "O-town" is the epicenter of America's musical youth quake—a mall-culture mecca teeming with shiny kids who have ambition to burn. It's also home base for Trans Continental Records, the teen-pop boot camp that cranks out bands to order.

As shorty and her dancers wop it up in the Florida heat, a bearded man approaches the side of the stage. "Excuse me, are you Johnny Wright?" he asks cautiously, "Britney's manager?" The man in the blue Kangol nods cordially. The unshaven businessman represents a toy company from St. Louis that's interested in producing a Britney doll. So interested, in fact, that the company is prepared to offer somewhere upwards of \$3 million for the right to do so.

"I believe we already have a doll deal on the table," says Wright. Soon, both men are on their StarTACs, each free ear trying to catch the other's conversation. After five minutes of hushed haggling, the bearded fellow ups the offer half a million. "Sometimes I'm scared," sings Spears in the distance. "Stuff like that happens quite a bit," Wright says, smiling.

Clean the bus? No. But Johnny Wright does clean up.

The tradition of whiteface darky music has persisted from the days of the blackface minstrel shows through Elvis and the Beatles. Most black artists found themselves relegated to the "soul" section of the record store or the

"R&B" radio format, while their paler counterparts rode the "pop" fast track to *American Bandstand*. Even today most record labels are segregated: There are "black" music departments and "pop" music departments. But in 1984, the imbalance of power shifted, almost imperceptibly.

Maurice Starr, the black Boston-based songwriter and producer, struck it big with New Edition. Their bubblegum soul sound was his sound. But after disputes over money (future R&B stars Bobby Brown, Ralph Tresvant, Ricky Bell, Michael Bivins, and Ronald DeVoé claim they received only \$1,000 and a VCR in album royalties), the teen stars bailed on Starr and went to MCA. Starr sued for the right to use the New Edition name.

"Maurice was not very savvy in those days," says



"White artists that do black music sell a lot of records," says Dave McPherson. "Backstreet Boys can sing. But they cannot sing as good as Jodeci or Boyz II Men. They can't."

Dick Scott, who began managing Starr after he lost New Edition (A Motown alumna), Scott served as Berry Gordy's "right hand." He had huge success with a black group, but they were stolen away from him. Seeking revenge, Starr wracked his brain for a way to outdo his last creation.

Then white lightning struck: Starr held auditions for five vanilla Boston youths and called them New Kids on the Block. He wrote their songs and showed them how to move.

New Kids on the Block would have made history if they hadn't sold a single record. "Their producer and writer was a black guy," says Wright. "Their manager was a black guy. That's unheard-of in the music business." But on the strength of cardiovascular jams like 1988's "You've Got It (The Right Stuff)," NKOTB went on to sell 50 million records in eight years, and in 1990 they generated more than

\$800 million in merchandise alone.

Besides flipping the old music-biz power structure, NKOTB had at least two other far-reaching effects: First, they saved Johnny Wright's ass. In 1985, Starr asked Wright to borrow a van and drive the kids to a few shows. At the time, Wright was a 25-year-old roller-rink DJ and promoter in Hyannis, Mass., who'd lost so much money trying to start his own vocal group that he'd been reduced to sleeping in his car. A five-day gig with NKOTB grew into a five-year crash course in every aspect of showbiz.

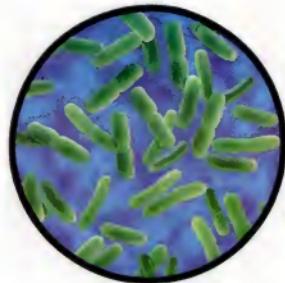
Second, they caught the eye of Lou "Big Poppa" Pearlman. In 1990, when the New Kids rented a private plane from Pearlman's Trans Continental Airlines, the pudgy jet mogul was so impressed that he decided to check out a New Kids concert. Sometime after the girls started screaming, he says he "realized that I was in the wrong business." Within a year he was combing Orlando for five hunks to form a group he'd call Backstreet Boys. He paid them a salary and moved their families to Orlando. He provided recording and rehearsal facilities and bought them a bus. But he still couldn't get them a record deal. So in 1992, he contacted Johnny Wright.

When Dave McPherson heard Backstreet Boys for the first time in 1993, the young black A&R rep was so impressed, he signed them right away. It was a bold move back in the age of grunge and thug rap. A few months later, his boss at Mercury decided to drop them. Then Jive Records tried to hire McPherson, and he told label chairman Clive Calder about Backstreet. "[Calder] was like, 'Yeah, come on, bring them,'" says McPherson. At that point, the five roster was packed with ghetto superstars like R. Kelly and Too Short. The label's experience with white pop groups was limited to say the least.

"At first, people [were] like, 'You're a black executive,'" McPherson recalls, "and you sign a wack pop group like this?" Having made his name by signing R&B vocalist Joe, McPherson understands the true meaning of terms like "urban" and "pop." "Joe sings his ass off," he says. "His last album sold more than a million copies. Now compare Joe vocally to Backstreet Boys, who sold over 30 million records." The difference seems skin-deep. "It's common sense," he says. "White artists that do black music sell a lot of records. Backstreet Boys are white guys, and they can sing. But they cannot sing as good as Jodeci or Boyz II Men. They can't. The standard is different."

America is still, for the most part, a white country. And pop music—*popular* music—is still a question of white tastes. Though black sounds rule the airwaves like never before, the same market forces that helped Pat Boone outsell Little Richard with his tepid cover of "Tutti Frutti" are still at work. Today, most kids—and most moms—are willing to sacrifice a soulful inflection for a familiar complexion.

But a good businessman knows better than to try to account for public taste. "Everybody wants a thing of their own," says McPherson, who is now senior vice president of A&R, urban music, for Epic Records and 550 Music. "Latin consumers want Ricky



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Martin. But I don't think you have to be Latin to sign Ricky Martin, just like you don't have to be white to sign George Michael, or black to sign Puff Daddy."

Full Force were not formed by audition. Three brothers and three cousins who lived around the corner from each other in Brooklyn, N.Y., were playing stickball on a hot July day in 1979 and said, "Let's start a group." Their friends told them to get a job. Sweaty rehearsals took place in Curt-T-T Bedeau's cramped basement. The same six guys are still together today, still working out of a Flatbush brownstone. Mom still gives them business advice. They still split all proceeds six ways.

This is the same squad that brought us UTFO's 1984 hip hop classic "Roxanne, Roxanne" and who played the bad guys in 1990's *House Party* (New Line). They sang harmonies for Bob Dylan on a cut from his 1988 album, *Down in the Groove* (Columbia). They produced a song for Selena (they finished the harmony parts after she was murdered). More recently, they've tapped the icy-teen pop explosion. These are some versatile brothers.

a couple years out of the loop, these proven songwriters and producers were considered passé.

"We said, 'Fuck all of this,'" Lou recalls. "Let's meet with some white mafucks.' And when we called, the white execs' arms was just open for us."

After Backstreet Boys recorded Full Force's "All I Have to Give," the floodgates were opened. "These pop group shits are the rage right now," says Lou. "They just won't die. We're doing stuff for 'N Sync, C-Note, all the Trans Con groups. A lot of people are

capabilities are ridiculous."

And that's why today's teen pop explosion is not just an updated minstrel show. What was once cruel mockery has been replaced with heartfelt yearning to melt into pure white chocolate. Groups like 'N Sync are what segregation was supposed to prevent—five white guys in Wu-Wear sweater-vests who can rock. They grew up on black culture; how could it not change them? They are taking the Sugarhill Gang on tour with them this summer; they want nothing more than to record a song with Busta Rhymes. So when they slip into Afro wigs for a Jackson 5 tribute, you can cringe, you can laugh, or maybe you can hold out hope for the future.

If 'N Sync were black," Wright says, "they would be perceived in the same vein as Boys II Men." Wright hasn't lost his ear or his mind. His Wright Entertainment Group manages black acts too, including Left Eye's pop trio, Black & White, and the bass group 95 South.

Until 1998, he also managed Backstreet Boys. A contract dispute grew into resentment over, among other things, Wright's involvement with 'N Sync. Lawyers were hired, and the beef strained Wright's relationship with Trans Con and broke up his 15-year relationship



The ad in the paper read, SONGWRITERS AND PRODUCERS FOR BACKSTREET BOYS AND 'N SYNC SEEKING NEW TALENT; CAUCASIANS SATURDAY, BLACKS AND HISPANICS SUNDAY.

The George brothers, to be exact: Bowlegged Lou, Paul Anthony, and B-Finc. They'd been singing on the block in Brooklyn in the Amplifiers since 1969, before their voices changed.

Cousins Curt-T-T, Baby Gerry, and J.R. "Shy-Shy" dejayed together as the Family Crew. "As hip hoped out as we were," recalls Gerry, digging into a to-go tray of curry in their basement studio, "we were on some ol' gothic rock stuff. Every little local show we did, they didn't know what to think, 'cause there we were in front of a bunch of black people looking like Motley Crue."

Full Force's first album, *Full Force* (Columbia, 1985), was way ahead of its time: The group sung smooth harmonies over raw breakbeats. There were rapping and scratching and skits and rock guitars and a new-jack-jazz-z-swing thing called "Alice, I Want You Just for Me." They cracked the Top 20 on the R&B charts with songs like 1986's "Unfaithful So Much" and "Temporary Love Thing." But pop radio wasn't ready. After three albums and a tour with Cameo, they tried producing other artists, and that's when the big hits came. Lisa Lisa struck platinum twice and reached the coveted No. 1 pop position with 1987's "Lost in Emotion" and "Head to Toe." But in 1994, a car accident stopped the music.

"Curt-T-T was driving a little Suzuki jeep, and I was asleep," says Lou. "A car ran the red light and smashed into us, and we just flew."

After Curt-T-T and Lou recovered, the group tried to resume their careers. "We started calling up different black execs," says Lou, "and they were like, 'Full Force?' Oh, you mean the niggas with the Jhericurls?" After

surprised that we're behind all this white shit. Now all the black producers are coming to us like, How can I be down with y'all?"

Things are going so well that there are even plans for a new Full Force album. "The Rolling Stones are still selling out concerts and making records 35 years later," says Wright, who's signed on to manage Full Force. But for now, Force are happy to be invisible—making music and money—from behind the scenes. They recently held an audition for some pop groups of their own. The ad in the paper read, SONGWRITERS AND PRODUCERS FOR BACKSTREET BOYS AND 'N SYNC SEEKING NEW TALENT; CAUCASIANS SATURDAY, BLACKS AND HISPANICS SUNDAY. Four hundred people showed up, of which Full Force selected three acts, including a phenomenal 14-year-old Latina singer-songwriter named Sonia Montez, a set of blonde twins from Bulgaria named Miss Match, and the cyber-influenced group L.O.L.

As much as Full Force's adventures in the teenage wasteland have taught them about the music business, they've also learned something about the next generation of white youth. "Justin Timberlake of 'N Sync blew us away with his human beat box thing," says Baby Gerry. "But that's him. That's in him."

After watching the 18-year-old heartthrob lead the five-man ensemble in a bizarre harmonic version of *Sandsford* and *Son* theme, Gerry knew he had to talk to this kid. "Come to find out he's listening to nothing but hip hop and Brian McKnight," Gerry says. "That's his whole world. And he's not trying to hide the influence. He sings on pop tracks and stuff, but his riff

with his wife and business partner. Through it all, Wright has stood by 'N Sync and they by him. "It's always been the stereotype that because black vocal groups came from the church, that's their thing, and when they do it, they're credible," he says. "But when white kids do it, they're just trying to mimic something. I don't understand the double standard."

Wright says working with 'N Sync is fun. They were friends who put themselves together before getting a record deal. They are doing this because they want to, and that's how Wright wants to live his life too.

"The music industry is always a battle," he says at the end of a long day at Disney World. "Someone's always trying to test you or catch you off guard. My job is to defend my artist at all costs. Even if I think the artist might not be right, I gotta protect their wish. In the end you hope that it's appreciated by your acts," he says, "but very often it's not. It's no longer a question these days if a group is gonna turn on you; it becomes a question of when."

Whether 'N Sync will get the street cred and critical respect to go with their enormous record sales and sold-out tours remains to be seen. But their success definitely signals a profound shift in youth culture. "The definition of pop music is changing," says Wright. "The kids are changing."

And a generation from now, when Justin's and Britney's kids are finding their heroes, America could be a very different place. "Look at MTV, stop any kid on the street," says Baby Gerry. "These kids are different. These white kids aren't the same white kids." Not that there's anything wrong with that, right? □



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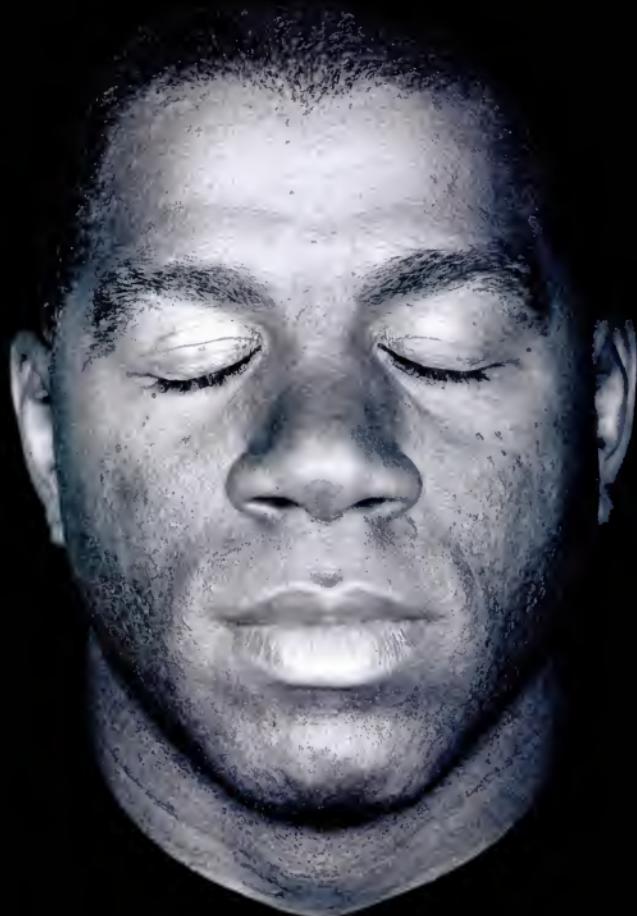
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PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAN WINTERS JUNE 4, 1999, BEVERLY HILLS



DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC

EARVIN JOHNSON has always seemed just a little too good to be true. There's his toothpaste-commercial smile, his record-shattering basketball career, even the candor about his HIV status. Now Magic is reinventing himself as an entrepreneur and champion of African-American economic independence. Has **HARRY ALLEN** found—at last—a great man who's as good as he seems?

Magic Johnson's hand is the biggest I've ever clasped. It's definitely the hand of a champion. Five championships, to be precise, over the course of his legendary 13-year career with the Los Angeles Lakers (see "Shot Clock," page 196). He's been officially recognized by the NBA as one of the 50 greatest men ever to play basketball. Fans at NBA.com voted him the game's second favorite player of all time, after Michael Jordan.

But in 1991, Magic met his toughest competitor. Most people remember where they were on that surreal afternoon of November 7, when he stoically announced that he'd contracted HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and would be retiring from basketball. It was a generation-defining moment, especially for young people for whom Magic had been a hero and for whom AIDS was an abstraction. After that day, it would always be AIDS: Before Magic, and After Magic.

Eight years after his diagnosis, Magic, now 40, believes that, thanks to God, good health care, diet, exercise, and positive thinking, "I don't have any virus in my bloodstream," and he defers specific health questions to Dr. David Ho, direc-

tor of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center, an affiliate of The Rockefeller University in New York City. A representative for Ho sent VIBE a written statement confirming that Magic has responded well to combination therapy for about four years, that his "viral load" has been undetectable, and that his CD4 cell counts are consistently much better than when he was diagnosed. According to Ty Trippet, spokesman for the American Foundation for AIDS Research, although cases do exist in which HIV-positive people have undetectable levels of the virus, HIV "is still in the body and people are technically HIV-positive. Just because it's undetectable doesn't mean you're cured. You can still transmit it to others."

Although the virus prematurely ended Magic's basketball days, he'd always had a postgame game plan. As he wrote in his second autobiography, *My Life* (Fawcett Crest, 1992), "I didn't want to be just another black athlete who was done with his playing career at the age of 36 and had nowhere to go except supermarket openings."

Today, he's more likely to own the supermarket. As founder and CEO of Magic Johnson Enterprises Inc., he oversees five corporate divisions covering 10 companies. His growing empire includes three Magic Johnson Theatres, a T.G.I. Friday's, and five Starbucks from coast to coast. Through the company's management and entertainment arms, he guides the careers of Mase, Steve Harvey, Vivica A. Fox, comedians Kelly Price, and produces TV and film projects. Magic's company is promoting Maxwell's current tour and Billy Blanks' 38-city Tae-Bo extravaganza. Oh yeah, and he's vice president and 5 percent owner of the Los Angeles Lakers, who, at press time, had just hired former Chicago Bulls coach Phil Jackson. "There can't be any more excuses about the coach," Magic has publicly stated. "We just got the best coach in the world."

It's hard to know the net worth of Magic's kingdom. As a privately held company, MJE doesn't publicize its total revenue. However, Johnson estimates that his holdings in these ventures have elevated his personal wealth from just under the \$100 million figure *Forbes* magazine published in 1996, to between \$200 million and \$250 million today.

Successful as he's become in recent years, he's taken his lumps along the way. In 1993, a Kalamazoo, Mich., judge, stating that he was acting on the request of lawyers representing both sides, dismissed a \$2 million lawsuit brought by a woman who claimed Magic gave her the HIV virus. In 1994, a Los Angeles health-care employee accused Johnson of sexual

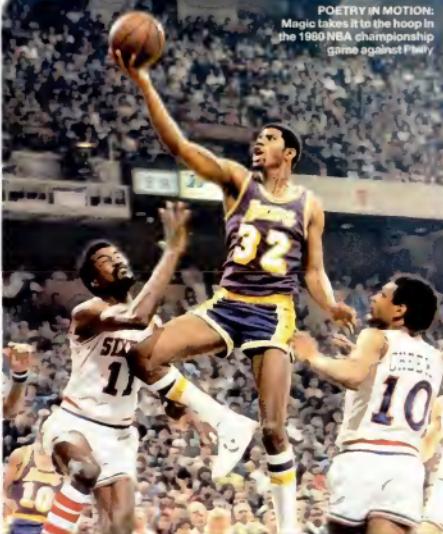
harassment and the club of firing her after she rejected him. In 1996 when he briefly rejoined the Lakers as a player, he was met with howls of protest from a few HIV-phobic members of the NBA. His stiff two-month attempt at a talk show (*Fox's The Magic Hour*) in 1998 was met with howls of protest from the viewing public. And earlier this year, Magic Johnson Music Management erroneously announced a management deal with Boyz

mother.) I sat in on a meeting at Magic's nonprofit organization and watched him accept an award. No matter where he went, people wanted to take a picture with him, tell him to keep doing what he's doing, touch him. Because they know that this man is the genuine article.

You used to play basketball. Now you're a businessman. At which are you better?

Both come naturally to me. But I

POETRY IN MOTION:
Magic takes it to the hoop in
the 1980 NBA championship
game against Philly



"ONE THING BASKETBALL DOESN'T DO IS BRING YOU THE POWER. POWER IS IN OWNERSHIP."

II Men, a deal that the group's manager (who had met with Johnson about an unrelated matter) says never existed.

Magic and I met once in New York and again in Los Angeles, where we were accompanied by his gracious and watchful publicist. What follows is culled from our conversations on both coasts. I watched him eat breakfast, followed him to a Tae-Bo class, and visited the cavernous Beverly Hills home he shares with his wife, Cookie, 40, and children Elisa, 4, and E.J., 7. (Andre, 18, Magic's oldest child, lives in Lansing, Mich., with his

think that since I've been playing basketball longer than I've been a businessman, I'd probably say, at this point, I was better at basketball. But I'm not just as good as a businessman as I was playing basketball.

What do you think your legacy will ultimately be?

Well, right now, basketball. But five years from now, you'll say "business," all the way. Yeah, people who recognize you recognize you for basketball, but really, it's small when you compare it to business. And one thing that basketball doesn't do is bring you the power. Power

is in ownership. And that's what's been lacking in our community. We think that because we're in sports and entertainment, that brings us power. But it really doesn't. Power is making a mayor, making a governor, making a president. Those people look at us only if we own something—a business. Then they say, "Wow, they're affecting a community." You're not affecting a community by just playing ball. They're gonna cheer for you, but you're not affecting them. But by owning a business, you are affecting a community, because you're hiring them. And then that brings the power.

When you first decided to be a businessman, you had to fight off the "dumb jock" image. Now that you are in business, there is an image that you are essentially the frontman for a lot of very powerful white corporations—almost like an extremely well-paid endorser. What do you say to that?

Well, it's not true, 'cause first of all, I put my dollars with their dollars. My money is in it; their money is in it. Second, they didn't come to me. I went to them. I went to Sony. I went to Friday's. I went to Starbucks. A frontman is somebody with no interest in the business. And all he does is sit there and receive a check. Well, that's not me. Fifty percent, I have equal voting.

But what would you say to those who say that the modern frontman does what you're doing: He puts money in, and he's visible—but that it's a more refined image for a more refined time?

No, See, 'cause one thing about white people, they don't have to come to our communities. Again, I went up there and asked them to do that. I told them what would happen. I put my money in. Again, I'm not a frontman for anybody. I just know that if we're the No. 1 moviegoers, but we don't have [theaters] in our communities, to me, that don't make sense.

Now, one good thing about me is that I understand you gotta be in partnerships. Because of the expertise I don't have [in restaurants], Friday's will have it. The expertise I don't have in the coffee business, Starbucks will have. But one thing they don't have is the expertise in the African-American community. So if you gonna say "the modern-day frontman," I guess everybody is a modern-day frontman. If I'm one, then everybody else is one, I guess.

Mase, an artist whom you manage, recently stated that he would no longer perform the music he has been performing because he's given his life to God.

Right. That's his decision. That was given with us.

What's being going to do next?

Well, we're going to look for film and TV for him now. We have a few offers for him. He just wants to have a clean role, whatever that is. You didn't see Will Smith

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on Fresh Prince cussin'. And already, two companies want to develop shows around him. They feel that they can make good roles for Mase. So he's fine.

Is he gonna make records?

I really don't know, because this just happened, like [snaps his finger] that.

One day, you get a phone call saying he's not going to make records anymore.

I know! [Laughs] Well, I was shocked like everybody else. I mean, you sittin' there, planning everything, gettin' ready for the record: "Okay, you gonna tour...." We'd just had the photo shoot with Puffy. I was just playing ball with him, and then two days later, we got a phone call: "I'm not doin' it no more." "Okay, you're not doing what?"

taking my medicine. I never, ever thought I was gon' die.

That is positive thinking.

A lot of what we come to have, or attract, or do, is mind over matter. It's mind. It's how we think, and how we deal with things. And again, the medicine's been great, and God has been taking care of me. So I'm cool. That's why I don't have any virus in my bloodstream. That's why my immune system is so strong. My T-cell count is way up, like it's supposed to be.

If you had not contracted the AIDS virus, how would your life be different now?

[Long pause] I probably wouldn't have all this stuff going on. When HIV came along, I was outta basketball. So I had an opportunity to get into what I've always

wanted to get into, which was business. So my life would be completely different. I'd probably still be playing basketball at the age of 40 or 39. We probably wouldn't be having this conversation unless it was a basketball conversation.

Who gave you AIDS?

[Quickly] You know, I don't get into all that. And always: "HIV." 'Cause they get mad at you if you say "AIDS."

How true, then, are the rumors that the female from whom you contracted it—because you did say it was your promiscuous lifestyle—was contacted, and a financial settlement was made?

How true is it? Mmm. I don't know. You got the information. You should tell me. [A little sharply] I told you I don't discuss it. Matter of fact, [glaucous questioning at his publicist] we can't discuss it.

You can't?

Uh-uh. And I don't. I don't never discuss it.

How come?

It's not really...first of all, long as you know I got it, and how I got it, that's all people really need to know.

And the way you got it was through heterosexual sex.

Right.

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. So you're not going to affirm or clarify or anything, in—that—

Just waitin' on the next question. [Laughs] I think sometimes, something needs to be left alone. This is one of those things.

Well, the next question goes right into the same area. Did you contact women that you...?

Oh, of course.

...And said, "I have AIDS, or HIV...."

Of course, I'm a responsible guy. I'm not a not-responsible guy. Of course, I was contacting people. If I can stand up and tell the world, I can definitely call somebody who I've had sex with and tell

them. And I did that. But some things should be kept private among people, and I hope that you would respect that. Because our lives have gone on. Okay? And that's what—that's what it's about. And that's what it's all about.

When you say our lives have gone on, you mean—

Hers and mine!

So you know it's one person?

Our lives have gone on. [Laughs] I told you, I'm not gon' discuss it. [Pauses] You're really good, and I have to admit it that to you. You probably—and not just because you sittin' here—you're probably one of the best I've ever had. You're good at your questions; you're sensitive, and you know how to...chop me up, to try to get...but

because it's one of the best investments that you could make. I own 5 percent. Back then, the team was worth \$200 million and sum'n. Soon, it's probably gon' be worth closer to \$400 million or \$500 million. Then you get paid every year. It's great, I mean, shoo. Why do you think all them cats are owners of those teams? Especially this one here. This one is worth so much money.

How are you involved day-to-day?

Day-to-day, not as much. But when they want me to become involved, I do: when there's a problem, when I see that they're not playing well, if I hear that they've been hanging out too much and it's affecting their game. Or if we're gonna make a trade, I do the background

"GOD'S BEEN TAKING CARE OF ME, AND I'VE BEEN TAKING CARE OF MYSELF.... I NEVER, EVER THOUGHT I WAS GON' DIE."

"I'm not rappin' no more." We knew he was goin' to church, we knew he was having, like, Bible studies. But we just didn't know he was gonna—all of a sudden—stop. But again, that's a good decision on his part.

What do you consider your greatest failure?

My greatest failure? Hmmm. I don't know. [Laughs] My greatest failure. [Long pause] I don't know. I can't think of what's the greatest failure. When you've failed a few times, you don't really look at the one that's "the greatest."

Is there a top three?

[Chuckles] You fail in different ways. You failed at the talk show, you failed as far as life with HIV....

Do you consider contracting it a failure?

No, no, no, no, no, no. What I'm saying is...let me see if I can put this in the right words: Before I was married to Cookie, I think I failed in our relationship. But just when we got married, I found out [I had HIV]. That's what I meant by that.

I want to talk to you about HIV and AIDS. What is your regimen? How many pills do you take every day, and what type of cocktail is it?

I've changed from the cocktail. That just happened, what, only about a month or so ago. Now I only take, basically, three pills a day.

And why did you make the change?

It's not on me, it's on the doctors. I just had my checkup a month ago, and everything's going great. But sometimes they wanna change, reduce, improve the drugs, and want me to try them, to see how I respond.

Why are you alive now?

Because the medicine is good, God's been taking care of me, and I've been taking care of myself. Positive thinking, and

I think this one, for the record, for me and you, outta respect for her, outta respect for me....we've dealt with it, and we gone on. It's eight years later now.

Is she still living?

Of course.

Are you in contact with her?

No, not in contact with her. No. Here's the reason why I'm asking. You have an image of being a caring, sensitive person.

Mm-hmm.

A lot of people had questions as to what happened to this woman, or the women, or whatever it was.

It's none of their business.

But here's the thing—

I am a caring guy, and I care about her, and that's how it happened.

And you acted in a caring manner—

Of course.

Which is what you're implying here, or what you're actually straight out saying.

But they don't have to know if I talk to her, what she's doing—

—or even if she got the advantage of your regimen, whatever it is that's kept you so healthy?

Of course. I would always give that to her. That would be stupid of me not to do that. It's like I said. We've moved on. I moved on, she's moved on. We moved on as a family. Her family, they moved on. It's all good. And so just tell everybody, "It's all good!" Everybody's doin' well—she's doin' well, I'm doin' well.

What you have though, right now, is called HIV. It hasn't turned into what they call full-blown AIDS.

It's not even close to that.

Let's talk about sports! Why did you become a part owner of the Lakers?

Well, I wanted to set the example, that not only could we play on the hardwood, but that we can own, too. And not only

check on 'em. I get information that they could never get.

Why hasn't Kobe Bryant jelled with the team?

He's still learning to play the game. Sometimes, he has to understand when it's not his shot: when to go in there to really draw the attention of the defenders, then kick it to somebody else. And he doesn't fully understand that yet. But also sometimes, when a guy comes in that's younger and doing what he's doing, making the money, getting the commercials, sometimes you wish you had that.

Does what you're saying apply to Shaquille O'Neal, who's the team captain but who is said to have a conflict with Kobe, based on Shaq originally expecting to be—Newsweek used the word—the "marque?"

I can't say that, 'cause I don't know that to be true.

I'm particularly thinking of this article

"Kobe Goes It Alone," from Newsweek [May 31, 1999]. It says here, "Nobody's been affected more by Bryant's star turn than O'Neal, the team captain. Shaq...wasn't prepared for the passion with which Lakers fans embraced the new kid. His instant stardom, the way the crowd took to Kobe, really hurt him," says one Laker. "Shaquille was supposed to be the marquee player."

See, those are things that the guys on the team will know. Now, [Lakers executive vice president of basketball operations] Jerry West and Mitch [Kupchak, general manager], who are there even more so than I am, have never said that to me. Nor has Kobe or Shaq.

What did [West and Kupchak] say to you?

Nothing. It was just "We got a problem that we're not bonding, we're not meshing." And "We gotta bring these two guys together somehow."

What advice would you give Kobe?

He has to bring the other players in,



GET **FIERCE**

mad. bold. new.
let it in you.



okay? If I keep feeding you, and you hittin', you gon' play harder. You feel better about yourself. And that's what Kobe now has to do. If they're scoring and playing well, that's gon' open it up for him even more. Like Michael [Jordan] used to do. See, Michael learned that, instead of scoring 60 points, "Let me score 40—"

—and invest the other 20.

[Points at the interviewer as if to say, "You got it!"] See? It made them a more dangerous team. Then they started winning all the championships. It took 'em seven years. But once he trusted that the other guys were gonna knock the shot down, it was over for the league then. And Kobe right now don't trust the other guys.

Our problem is we're not a unit. And everybody follows Kobe and Shaq. So if they see they're not on the same page, the other guys are not gonna be on the same page.

When I was playin', I had to take my ego and leave it in the locker room. Kareem [Abdul-Jabbar] had to leave his ego in the locker room. James Worthy had to leave his ego in the locker room... for the betterment of the team. For winning. But right now, we, the Lakers, don't do that. We step on the court with our egos. And that's hurt us in the long run.

KOBE AND SHAQ ARE STRANGERS ON THE BASKETBALL COURT. THEY DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER. THEY DON'T READ EACH OTHER."

Kareem and I was best friends on that basketball court. I knew his every mood. I knew his eye when he wanted that ball; when he told me by just the look in his eyes, "You better not pass to nobody else. I want it. Bring it to me." I knew when he was mad. I knew when he was rollin'. I knew when he didn't want to play that night, so I would dominate offensively. See? See, Kobe and Shaq are strangers on the basketball court. They don't know each other. They don't read each other. Pippen, Jordan, Knew each other. Isiah, Dumars. See, you gotta have two stars to win.

Do you always need that strong duo?

Oh, no question! Olajuwon, Drexler. You gotta have it. Or forget it. Kobe and Shaq need each other. And if they keep fightin', or whatever they doin' up here, not known' each other, they will not win a championship. Point-blank.

Why won't you as a businessman—with 5 percent ownership in one of the most valuable franchises in the world—step in and say, "You're messin' with my business?"

I'm getting ready to. You didn't give me time. Shad had to leave town before I could get 'em both together. So, you didn't give me time to sit 'em both down. That's what I'm going to do.

Let me ask you this question: How do you see wealth, having not bad any, and now having, by any estimate, a great deal of it?

I often asked myself, Why did He bless me with all this? Why was I chosen, when I used to drink sugar water when there was no Kool-Aid or lemonade? When I had to have water in cereal, because the milk had run out? Why do I go from there...to here? Why me?

For what would you give up all of this? Your money, your wealth?

Oh! Well, I think for just being happy. Just for my family. If God had another plan for me, then that's what I would do, too. Really? And go back to living in a regular house and working in, say, a department store?

Oh yeah. I don't have no problem with that. I've always had jobs. You know, it's funny! I'm still the crazy country guy from Lansing, Michigan. If I lost it all, I would still be a happy guy and still go on living. Cookie and I been there already, and we had a great time. We went to the movies every Sunday. We went swinging on the swings, and we made up stuff to do when we didn't have anything. And so if God says, "Okay, that's it. Zip! You broke!" Okay, I'll go get a job. 'Cause I'm a worker, so I'm gon' work. And I'll have a happy life.

Growing up, who were your role models?

Shot Clock

Magic Johnson became a basketball legend two points at a time. Let's go to the videotape. By Josh Tyranigie



Magic moments: (from left) Finals MVP, 1980; battling Bird in 1982; the Dream Team's '92 Olympic gold rush; Coach Johnson works the sidelines, 1994.

JANUARY 1975—Lansing, Mich., sports-writer Fred Stabbley Jr. watches 15-year-old Everett High School sophomore Earvin Johnson rack up 36 points, 18 rebounds, and 16 assists. He nicknames the kid "Magic." Two years later, Magic leads Everett to a 27-1 record and the Michigan Class A title, scoring 34 points in the overtime final.

MARCH 26, 1979—in the first chapter of basketball's greatest one-on-one rivalry, Magic's Michigan State team beats Larry Bird's Indiana State squad 75-64 in the NCAA championship game. Magic scores 24 points and is named the Final Four's Most Outstanding Player. In June, the Los Angeles Lakers draft Magic as point guard, the first overall selection; Bird goes second to the Boston Celtics.

MAY 16, 1980—Subbing for an injured Kareem Abdul-Jabbar at center, Magic scores 42 points and adds 15 boards and 7 assists against the Philadelphia 76ers to give the Lakers the first of five '80s titles. He becomes the first rookie named Finals MVP and is rewarded with then-reCORD 25-year, \$25 million contract.

NOVEMBER 18, 1981—Unhappy with his role in coach Paul Westhead's offense, Magic issues a locker-room ultimatum: He goes, or I go. Westhead is fired the next day, and young assistant Pat Riley takes his place. In June, the Lakers beat Philadelphia in six games to win the title. Magic is Finals MVP. Paul Westhead?

APRIL 1983—Magic is named to the all-NBA first team, beginning a streak of nine consecutive selections.

APRIL 6, 1984—Magic feeds the bell to Kareem in the low post—and the bucket makes Abdul-Jabbar the NBA's all-time leading scorer.

JUNE 3, 1984—in a 137-104 Game 3 thrashing of the Celtics, Magic sets a Finals record with 21 assists. The Lakers win the batte, but Bird and the Celtics win the war, taking the series in seven games.

JUNE 9, 1985—After two years of frustrating play-or-losses, the Lakers, e.e., x.e.

Showtime, show up the Celtics 111-100 for the title.

JUNE 14, 1987—The Lakers beat Boston 106-93 to win the title in six. In Game 4, Magic hits his career-defining shot—a "baby hook" in the lane (probed from Abdul-Jabbar) that drives through the net and puts the dagger in the Celts. Magic gets his third Finals MVP award and his first of three regular-season MVP trophies.

JUNE 21, 1989—the Lakers make good on Riley's "repeat" guarantee, downing the Detroit Pistons 108-105 to win a brutal seven-gamer. They are the first team to win back-to-back NBA titles since the '65-'69 Celtics.

APRIL 15, 1991—Magic breaks Oscar Robertson's record for assists with 9,886 coming in a game against the Dallas Mavericks.

NOVEMBER 7, 1991—On the eve of a new season, Magic announces he's HIV-positive and will retire from basketball.

FEBRUARY 9, 1992—Despite his not playing a single regular-season game, fans vote Magic into the All-Star game starting lineup. He scores 25 points in the West's 153-113 win, and is named the game's MVP.

AUGUST 6, 1992—Magic and the Dream Team beat Croatia to win the gold medal in Barcelona.

MARCH 23, 1994—Magic coaches the Lakers their season's final 16 games, guiding the squad to a 5-11 record. When the season ends, Magic resigns from coaching and purchases an interest in the team.

JANUARY 20, 1995—a beefed-up Magic reclaims the Lakers as a power forward after four seasons away. His first night back he contributes 19 points, 10 assists, and 8 rebounds.

FEBRUARY 14, 1996—Magic posts his record 138th triple double in a win against the Atlanta Hawks. The Lakers finish 29-11, but after a bitter first-round play-off loss to the Houston Rockets, Magic retires for good.

Additional reporting by Josh Tyranigie

Vanessa Marcil
Actress

If Head & Shoulders
leaves my hair looking
like this, why mess
with a good thing.



You can never spot the ones who use Head & Shoulders.



Changes
dandruff problems
into beautiful hair.

For FREAKY TAH of the LOST BOYZ, hanging in the streets of Jamaica, Queens was the most natural thing in the world. But when a local beef escalated out of control, Tah paid the ultimate price. When a rapper lives the lifestyle of the rich and shameless, can he really go home again? By Greg Donaldson

When Raymond Rogers, a.k.a. Freaky Tah of the Lost Boyz, stepped out of the party at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in his South Jamaica neighborhood of Queens, N.Y., he was alone. It was around 4:10 a.m., and the stretch of road opposite the hotel was deserted. A hundred feet away lay Baisley Park, unlike and forbidding. "Tah was never alone except for that night," his brother Shawn Rogers says. "Wherever we went, LB [Fam [the Lost Boyz and their entourage] rolled deep."

With two gold albums and a host of party anthems to their credit, including "Music Makes Me High" (1996) and "Lifestyles of the Rich and Shameless" (1995), the Lost Boyz—four rowdy, fun-addicted friends from the same Queens block—had become a fixture at high-profile neighborhood parties. The one at the Sheraton, hosted by a group of local promoters, continued into the early hours of March 28.

positioned himself 10 feet away, and fired a shot from a 9 mm automatic. The bullet entered the back of Tah's head and exited behind his right ear.

As Tah lay sprawled on the sidewalk, blood spilling onto his cream-colored pullover, the shooter squeezed off two warning shots to freeze the gathering crowd, sprinted across the street through Baisley Park to a green minivan, and sped off with three accomplices.

At 4:30 a.m., Freaky Tah, 28, was pronounced dead on arrival at Jamaica Hospital. The police investigation would later reveal that the killing stemmed from a pair of robberies that had escalated into a beef that had little to do with Tah himself. But his murder is not random as it may seem. Tragically, Freaky Tah died by following his best instincts, by trying to "keep it real" and remaining in his battle-scarred neighborhood close to his family and friends long after he'd become a star. "Tah hated to tour," his friend and producer Glenn Faide remembers. "Whenever he landed

moved back down South, leaving their homes to children who did not have the same job opportunities. Signs of blight appeared. In 1988, a drug gang called the Supreme Team became so brazen that they assassinated a police officer sitting in a car as he guarded the house of a witness in a case against them.

The Supreme Team are long gone, but the gun-smoke mentality—and the illegal drugs—remain. Down busy Guy R. Brewer Boulevard, a block from where Tah grew up, sit two bleak public housing developments, the Baisley Houses and the Forty Houses. "If you're not from the Forty Houses," a local cop warns, "don't go there." The two precincts that cover South Jamaica reported 61 homicides in the last two and a half years.

As tough as the so-called "back blocks" of South Jamaica can be, Tah was drawn to them. Frank Moore, a barber at Butter Cutters on Guy R. Brewer, where the dreadlocked Tah had his facial hair trimmed, remembers, "Tah would walk his two pit bulls down

QUEENS

It attracted 300 people, mostly rich hustlers or guys acting like they had money. Cristal and Moët flowed freely. With Lost Boyz frontman Mr. Cheeks (Terrence Kelly, 28) and sidekick Pretty Lou (Eric Ruih, 27) on one side of the Grand Ballroom and hype man Tah by the bar on the other, the well-heeled crowd mingled under huge crystal chandeliers.

At 4 a.m., when Cheeks was ready to leave, he gathered Pretty Lou and headed out, gesturing for Tah to come along. "Tah, we got room in the car," Cheeks said. Tah waved his partner off. "Nah, I'm safe. I'm in the hood."

Moments later, Tah made his way into the damp spring night, took three steps down the sidewalk along empty Baisley Boulevard, and paused over a manhole cover. According to police reports, a lone gunman wearing a dark ski mask approached Tah from behind,

at [John F.] Kennedy [Airport in New York], the first thing Tah would do is call one of us to pick him up and bring him to the 'hood. This is family. This was home." For Tah, showing love for the streets overrode the potential dangers of stray bullets and player haters. But sometimes loyalty can be fatal.

The Jamaica neighborhood that Freaky Tah would not abandon is wedged against the rump of New York's suburban Nassau County, Long Island. Low-flying planes from nearby Kennedy Airport lumber over streets lined with impeccable brick houses bordered by emerald-green lawns. But behind the placid facade are pockets of urban decay.

In the 1950s, the area was populated by African-Americans who arrived from the South, landed civil service jobs, prospered, and bought homes. In the late '70s, when the original home buyers retired, many

the street, kickin' it with people, talkin' with little kids. He just tried to live like everybody else." But everybody else wasn't living as large as Freaky Tah and his Lost Boyz. Although they aren't millionaires, Mr. Cheeks owns a home in New Jersey and Tah had an apartment in middle-class Kew Gardens along the Van Wyck Expressway in Queens. When they hung out in South Jamaica, both rappers wore chains worth five figures. "You can't come through with heavy jewelry when somebody close by is worrying about gettin' some Wonder Bread and not expect problems," says Chris Lighty, CEO of Violator Records and Management, which represents Mobb Deep, Busta Rhymes, Noreaga, and Cam'ron.

Tah tried to bridge the gap between himself and those without a record deal by setting up neighborhood basketball tournaments, buying local kids



LOGIC

VIBR 100

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sneakers and clothes, and maintaining the same rugged personality he had before he became a star. "[If he was angry], Tah would scream on you," says Faide. "You didn't have the heart, you wouldn't get past his voice." Tah also made a point of offering kids around the way opportunities in the music business. The neighborhood is seething with would-be rappers. If they couldn't rhyme, Tah would put them on anyway. "He brought [his neighborhood friend] B'Wild on the Lollapalooza tour for three months," Tah's brother Shawn says. "All B'Wild had when he left out on tour was a toothbrush." When they weren't hanging out in the group's hotel room eating takeout, guys from around the way would haul equipment, sell T-shirts, and hand out flyers.

Freaky Tah was known as a good friend around South Jamaica, but he was also a two-sided symbol. As he took his daily walk down Guy R. Brewer, wearing his iced-out chain with its signature gold stick-

'n' roll—has long drawn its inspiration from the lives of troubled people. In the '60s and '70s, the Temptations harmonized about escaping the "hood on Cloud Nine" (1969), and Stevie Wonder blasted us with a slice of street life on "Living for the City" (1973). But the musicians who chronicled the hardships rarely portrayed themselves as participants in the drama. Rappers are different. Even those who buy homes in exclusive enclaves—like Mobb Deep and Nas, who purchased residences on tony Long Island—still rhyme about "staying in the projects forever." As Havok of Mobb Deep said earlier this year in VIBE, "We're never going to forget where we came from. [The projects are] our roots. That's what made us."

For many artists, success in the game is contingent on creating and maintaining an outlaw image, and that doesn't include living in the suburbs. According to Todd Boyd, author of *Am I Black Enough for You? Popular Culture from the 'Hood and Beyond* (Indiana

Dirty Bastard, Queen Latifah, Guru, and of course, Tupac and B.I.G. have been victims of robbery, assault, and murder. Lighty says there's an unwritten rule about the "hood" among successful rappers he works with: "When the streetlights go on, I'm out."

The Lost Boyz all grew up in small but comfortable single-family homes within blocks of one another in their South Jamaica neighborhood. Young Tah was definitely the most rambunctious of the group. "We could never go anywhere because Tah was always on punishment for getting bad grades," remembers Pretty Lou. "He always had to stay in the yard." When the four friends were not on parental lockdown, Tah was constantly instigating petty mischief. "He was always amping us to climb up on garages and tall trees," says Lou, who has a fear of heights. As they became teenagers, the Boyz continued acting up.

"Tah, we got room in the car," Cheeks said. Tah waved his partner off. "Nah, I'm safe. I'm in the 'hood."

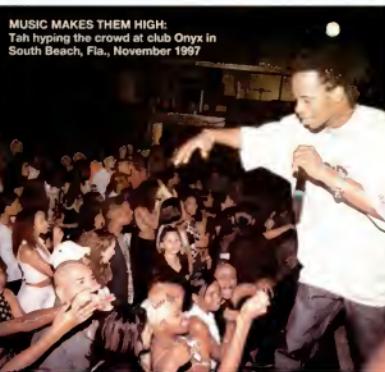
figure pendant, he stood for success. At the same time, he was a bitter reminder to those who would never succeed. Actor and Onyx rapper Fredro Stoggs, who grew up in South Jamaica, describes the current of resentment that lies just beyond the hand slaps and hugs a successful artist receives. "You could be hangin', havin' a good time," he says. "But you know there's a hater 20 feet away."

Negotiating one's path across the class divide is a challenge hardly unique to rappers. As a gold-selling artist, Freaky Tah had joined the ranks of increasingly wealthy African-Americans, many of whom find themselves torn between a desire to stay true to their old neighborhood and represent as role models, and the urge to retreat to the burbs, where life is calmer. The dilemma is particularly acute for rappers who often draw inspiration from kids around the way. "When a rapper moves to suburban America," says Lighty, "all he can write about is, 'The cops are pullin' me over cause I got a \$100,000 car and I'm black.' That's it."

Sure, the Notorious B.I.G. rapped about life after mega-success in "Mo Money Mo Problems" (1997), Jay-Z complains about women drawn to his money on "Can I Get A..." (1998), and Nas invites those in the old neighborhood who are jealous of his fame to "Hate Me Now" (1999). All three singles illustrating the stress of newly acquired wealth have been highly successful. But what happens when rappers inevitably settle into their more affluent lifestyle? What will they rhyme about then?

Popular music—from the blues to country to rock

MUSIC MAKES THEM HIGH:
Tah hyping the crowd at club Onyx in
South Beach, Fla., November 1997



University Press, 1997), moving into the burbs is sometimes seen by rappers as "moving into enemy territory." Furthermore, "in [their neighborhoods], rappers get something money can't buy," says Michael Dyson, a distinguished scholar in African-American studies at Columbia University. "Respect and an appreciation of where they came from."

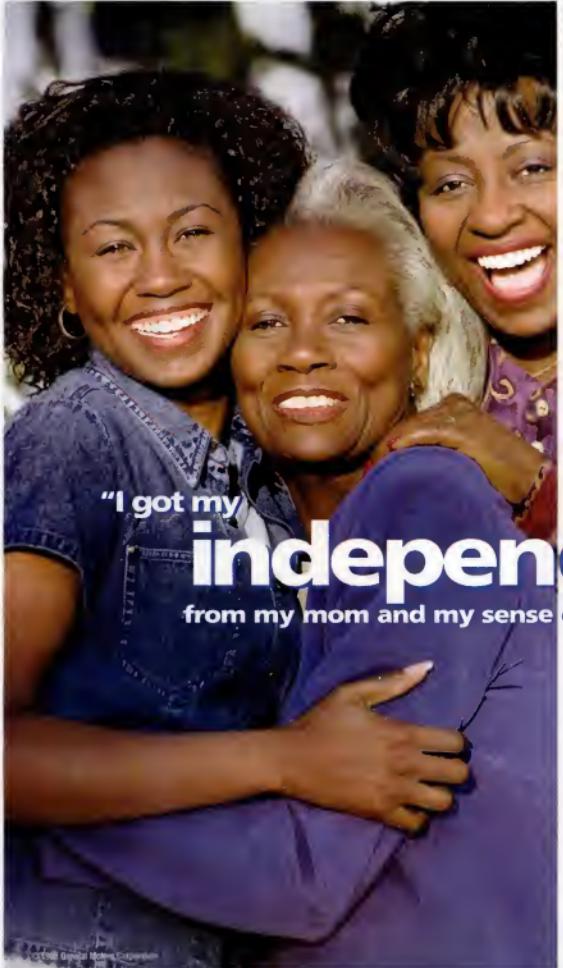
But the ego gratification and creative inspiration rappers get from hanging out in the streets can come at a high price. One month before Tah was shot dead, New York rapper and underground star Big L, whose group, D.I.T.C., is releasing a self-titled album on Tommy Boy later this year, was murdered just blocks from where he grew up—blasted nine times in the face on a Harlem street corner. And Busta Rhymes, Ol'

"We came from good families," Mr. Cheeks explains, "but the street life had pull." Cheeks says he sold a little weed, and all four cut a lot of classes. After they all got kicked out of John Adams High School, Tah did home repair and Pretty Lou became a courier at Kennedy Airport. But Cheeks dreamed of a different life. "I'd be passin' through the park and niggas be jinglin', chillin'. I said 'Hey, let's quit our jobs and do music.'"

At jams in Baisley Park in the early '90s, Cheeks and Tah possessed such an uncanny ability to play off each other that they told people they were brothers. Their voices were a perfect blend. Tah was the thunder, his sound muscular and grating. Cheeks was the rain "because he'll bring it down and wet you up," Pretty Lou explains.

In 1994, Cheeks and Tah signed with Uptown Records and brought Lou and DJ Spiggy Nice (Ronald Blackwell, 29) along. Their debut album, *Legal Drug Money* (Uptown/Universal, 1995), which included the hit single "Jeeps, Lex Coup, Bimaz & Benz" went gold. In 1995, when Uptown dissolved, the Lost Boyz signed with Universal, and in 1997 their second album, *Love Peace and Happiness*, also went gold. As the group's success grew so did the crowd of people around them. "When they'd walk into the Tunnel [nightclub] in Manhattan or Mercedes [in Jamaica, Queens] they'd have 50 guys with them," says Shawn. "If they'd do a show in Virginia, they'd have 10 carloads."

But some of their most loyal dogs lived by the unforgiving code of the street, which dictates that every sign of disrespect is a test of manhood and status, and that deadly force is always an option. Cheeks and Tah had earned the privilege to fight their battles with lawyers instead of guns. But that privi-



"My grandma was a daring young woman.

Driving her trusty General Motors car to California. Then driving to New York to enjoy the jazz scene there, that's where she met Grandpa. And Mom had her first business when she was eight...a lemonade stand by the side of a dusty road. I learned all about following my dreams from my mom and grandma. And about the dependability of GM cars. So, when I announced I was heading to California in my new GM car, they knew I would be just fine. And so did I."

"I got my

independence

from my mom and my sense of adventure
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lege didn't matter much on a dark street.

According to 25 to Life/Gorilla Street rapper Tragedy, who came of age in the sprawling Queensbridge Houses in Queens, it is a major mistake to get too close to a life whose rules you no longer live by. "I'll never let the 'hood define me," Tragedy says. "When you [have an option to get out and you] choose the streets, you are going against the laws of nature."

After Tah's death, the detectives in the 113th Precinct squad worked quickly. Within a week, identification of the minivan led to the arrest of Rasheen Fletcher, 22, the owner of the vehicle, and Ryan Frith, 24, the driver. Both men were charged with second-degree murder. The shooter and the third accomplice were still at large.

Statements from law enforcement sources and people close to the Lost Boyz reveal a complex history behind Tah's murder. Last August, Cheeks had been robbed at gunpoint of a \$10,000 gold chain in South Jamaica. Around the same time, a group of Cheeks' friends were also robbed at gunpoint. Even though neither incident was reported to police, the robbers signed a feud between LB Fam and a crew that peddles cocaine and heroin across the Van Wyck on 135th Street and Liberty Avenue. According to police sources, Cheeks and his boys believed the Liberty Avenue crew were responsible for the robberies.

"It's one thing to rob Cheeks; he's not going to retaliate. He's got too much to lose," says a police officer familiar with the neighborhood. "But some of his boys are hustlers. If they get robbed and don't react, they're finished on the street."

In December, Michael Saunders, a man with connections to the Liberty Avenue posse, was shot dead as he stood at the corner of Liberty Avenue and 134th Street. With Saunders' killing (which has yet to be solved), the neighborhood beef escalated out of control. Soon

the actual shooter, so he went for the high-profile Cheeks. When he couldn't find Cheeks, he settled for Tah. At first, Jones was satisfied with "a brother for a brother," says a police source. When Jones found out Cheeks and Tah were unrelated, he put his head in his hands in remorse.

Three weeks after Tah's murder, Frith, Fletcher, and Jones are all in jail awaiting trial on second-degree murder charges. Meanwhile, Mr. Cheeks and Pretty Lou are holed up in a safe house outside New York City, in a suburb far from the South Jamaica neighborhood they once championed.

Friends sit or stand around them in the living room; a 260-pound bodyguard straddles the entrance to the small kitchen. In the aftermath of Tah's killing, there have been several shooting incidents in the neighborhood, and at least one murder. Three days after Tah's killing, a man was chased and shot dead near the Van Wyck and Liberty Avenue. About a week later, a young man said to be close to the Lost Boyz, was



with hip hop veteran Grandmaster Vic replacing Tah as the group's hype man, the Boyz completed a successful European tour in May. Cheeks is also in demand as a solo artist, having collaborated on a string of hits including Queen Pen's 1997 "Party Ain't a Party," Men of Vizion's 1999 "Do You Feel Me? (...Freak You)," and 112's 1996 "Come See Me." But as an artist, it would be difficult for him to abandon his roots. The Lost Boyz may be known as party rappers, but the lyrics Cheeks spits out so freely are stories of the 'hood. The gold single "Renee" (1996), on which Cheeks sings of a fictional girlfriend lost to gunfire, haunts fans precisely because such events are real in places like South Jamaica.

That's why Scruggs, whose last album with Onyx was *Shut 'Em Down* (Def Jam, 1998), says he regularly checks in with his little brother, who still lives in home in South Jamaica, when he's on the road. "I could be in Japan and I still know what's goin' on, who's in jail, 'cause I talk to him on a daily basis," says Scruggs.

But as some rappers move away from the streets and rely increasingly on news gleamed secondhand, they may discover an advantage to the distance—valuable insight and, in turn, the possibility of lyrics that go beyond mere reporting. "We got enough warriors on the street," says Tragedy. "What we need is some teachers and generals like Malcolm X and Geronimo Pratt, cats who see the big picture."

For hours, Cheeks and his boys share tales of Tah—his life and his funeral. "Two hundred and fifty cars. Nobody could get in or out of Green Acres Mall," Pretty Lou remembers. "Tah loved to cause a ruckus." Gradually, all the talk of the neighborhood brings out an instinct that Cheeks may never be able to deny.

"Let's go back right now," someone suggests.

"The hood's on fire," Cheeks reminds him. Even so, a limousine is ordered for the trip. "Tinted windows," Cheeks stipulates.

Just like that, Cheeks and four of his boys are headed back to South Jamaica. The white

"You can't come through with heavy jewelry when somebody close by is worrying about gettin' some Wonder Bread and not expect problems."

Cheeks was getting death threats through the streets. He took them seriously enough to start wearing a bulletproof vest.

In late March, three months after the murder of Michael Saunders, Freaky Tah was shot to death. Eleven days later, on April 8, Kelvin Jones, 29, half brother of Saunders, was snatched up at his home by police in Albany, N.Y. The cops charged Jones as the shooter in Tah's murder. After the arrest, the *New York Daily News* reported that Jones had "combed three cities—New York, Albany, and Allentown, Pa.—looking for the man he thought killed his brother." According to a law-enforcement official, Jones couldn't find the LB Fam member he thought was

arrested and charged with the shooting.

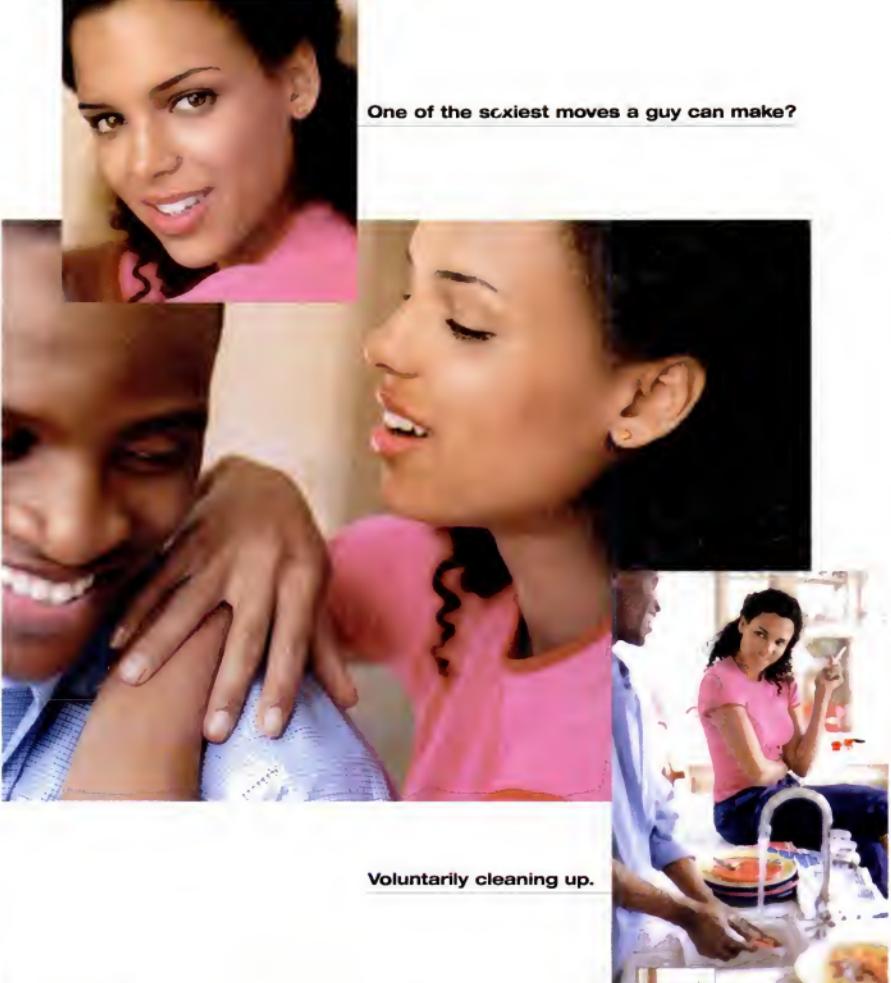
Cheeks slumps into the sofa. "I can't believe I'm not going to see Tah no more," he says.

"That hard, ill voice," Lou adds.

Cheeks sucks in a lungful of smoke and blows it out through his glittering gold teeth. Assembled members of LB Fam study him closely. "I tried to be everything I could be," Cheeks mutters softly as he rolls another blunt. "We come through and give love, and when we skate out all they wanna say is, 'See, I told you the nigga was garbage.' Fuck keepin' it real."

Mr. Cheeks could easily turn his back on South Jamaica. Despite the loss of Tah, the Lost Boyz's third album, *LB IV Life* (Universal), drops this month. And

limousine glides over the bridges and parkways on the way to Queens. Blunt smoke foggs the windows. In the darkness, the limo might as well be a hearse. With his back to the driver, Cheeks gives explicit directions to him through a small window. "When you get there, just drive, don't stop for nothin'." A buddy named One six opposite Cheeks, grinning, his face lit by the neon lights of passing storefronts. Every few minutes, One calls for the music to be lowered, nods at Cheeks, and pronounces slowly, "I love this nigga." Cheeks rocks back and forth. He moves his blunt away from his mouth, forms silent words with his lips, and smiles. Cheeks is going home. □



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NOREAGA's new album,
Melvin Flynt Da Hustler, is
way past "Half Baked."

Now Superthug meets
Superhustler when a super
rap star interviews his own
alter ego. Confused?

Join the club.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY PIOTR SIKORA APRIL 29, 1999, QUEENS, NEW YORK

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This is Noreaga. N.O.R.E. Niggaz on the Run Eatin'. General Noreaga. The man who brought you "Superhit" and "N.O.R.E." and such hits like this. The man who held the C-N-N clique together. The man who did a lot of things. The man who smokes and smokes and smokes, and the man who's putting together the *Thugged Out* Entertainment movie and so forth. The man who does everything for you. Noreaga, the impeccable, the general, the nationalist—the crime nationalist. The beautiful, the eloquent, the Noreaga, the N.O.R.E., meets with Melvin Flynt—the introduction.

MELVIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. This is Melvin Flynt Da Hustler. I never met Noreaga till today. I was looking forward to meeting them. They say we look alike. They say we are of the same origin. They say that Noreaga sold a lot of records. [To be exact, 713,000.] Melvin Flynt is gonna double that, though. He's different. He's an intellectual. The intellectual Melvin Flynt. I introduce myself with integrity and enthusiasm and vigor. Going towards the new millennium is this brutally honest individual with intentions to take over the world.

NOREAGA: Where do you shop at, brother?

Jamaica Avenue, Queens. Third Avenue, Brooklyn. I shop everywhere. Worry about yourself, asshole.

I'm from Lefrak [City Projects],
Queens, Melvin. Where are you from?

I was born in a slow, small city called Niggarish, Thugged Out. It was crazy. It was kinda flagrant. I grew up just like you, fuckin' Noreaga. We look alike. You're just a little chubbier than me. I did the same things you probably did. I grew up, I was the only child.

I always was a selfish kind of guy. Fuck, I'm like you. I'm just two different people in two different places with two different minds and two different asses. So anytime you ask me something, I'm gonna give you some stupid shit. So just get on with the questions.

Where do you live now?
None of your fuckin' business,
asshole. Where you live?

Okay...what was your first job?
Getting my c— sucked.

What's your most memorable experience from childhood?

Getting my c— sucked, no doubt.

I'm half black and half Puerto Rican, and I feel like that has a lot to do with the way my personality is. What's your ethnic background?

Well, I'm half Melvin Udall from the movie *As Good as It Gets*, and I'm half Larry Flynt from *Hustler* magazine.

So you're related to Larry Flynt?

Naw, but I like his style, so I respect it. I respect when he came to the courthouse and he had on a shirt that said, I'M WITH STUPID. And the next time he wore a shirt that said, I WISH I WAS BLACK. And especially when he found out that the President was getting head. He wanted to put everyone else out there, so he put up a million dollars to any woman who said she gave head to anybody in Congress. I respect that. I'm on the political side of Larry.

So As Good as It Gets and *The People vs. Larry Flynt* are your favorite movies?

Well, *Sleepers* is my favorite because it's like, the bad guys is bad guys and they grow up to be good guys, but then they turn into bad guys again. And that's my shit. I like to be a bad guy/good guy/bad guy.

I call myself a "thug," while you describe yourself as a "hustler." What's the difference between the two?

Well, when you're a thug, you thug to thug, you understand? When you're a thug, you thug to *thug*. It could be

anything. When you're a hustler, you're hustling to hustle. You're hustling to get paper, that's the objective. So I figure I always been a thug, but the reason why is 'cause I'm a hustler. I'm tryin' to get that paper. That's the difference. A thug would just thug it, while a hustler is thuggin'

at the same time, but making his money... I got plaques on my wall, hustler plaques.

What's your hustle? What do you do to make your money?

I like to do shit legal and illegal. And the shit I like to do legal is being involved in this music shit. And the shit I do illegal is... I wouldn't be here talking to you right now if I was gonna tell you that. Let's just say that I work with a lot of big-timers. Stunners. A lot of flashy shit. Niggas that buy chicks diamond rings so they can walk with 'em on their toes.

What type of women do you like to spend time with?

The same kind you like, but pretty.

"Wow. On my song, *Banned From TV*, I compared my competition to the "extra skin on my dick." But you're just downright rude. Like, if someone gives you a compliment, you'll just be like, "Yeah, whatever. Did you get me that soda?" Why are you so disrespectful?

It's different. It's two different personalities we dealin' with. We got the everyday-life person, which is you. But now you're dealin' with the person who just doesn't want to be bothered. It's not that I'm disrespectful or self-centered or anything like that. It's just that I wanna be by myself. I just be wantin' to be me, Melvin Flynt. You understand? □

**"I'M JUST TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN TWO DIFFERENT PLACES
WITH TWO DIFFERENT MINDS AND TWO DIFFERENT. . ."**

VIBE contributor Noreaga, not crashing his whip



The people



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CASE

BACK IN BLACK He touched us and teased us a few years ago with his rhythm and blues. Then he pulled out. And disappeared. Elliott Wilson finds out where the singer forever known as CASE has been, and where he's going.

This R&B dude is on a mission. It's almost quitting time, and a multitude of nine-to-fivers in suits wobble home on some TGIF shit. Case, DefJam A&R man Jojo Brim, and husky bodyguard Bo are racing through Manhattan's mean streets. Cell phone glued to his ear, Newport planted in his mouth, Case ignores the traffic laws that protect pedestrians. His quest? To cop rocks in Midtown's diamond district before the steel riot gates are rolled down for the evening. When the trio enter Manny's Jewelry Co. they make a beeline for Tito's booth—he who jewels up rap stars. Soon enough, Case is sold on the diamond-studded silver Cartier watch that Tito is wearing. Ten thou later, Case's wrist is glistening. Much like his born-again career. Indeed, redemption is the theme this year, as Case's enchanting platter *Personal Conversation* (Def Jam)—fueled by Def Jam's 1998 *Rush Hour* soundtrack-endorsed Joe collaboration "Faded Pictures" and the irresistibly heartfelt wedding song "Happily Ever After"—is (at press time) burning up *Billboard's* charts.

"Just picture it: You go from being dead broke and then you're making 10 G's to sing for 10 minutes," says Case. But the 24-year-old crooner has learned some hard lessons. His career fizzled just as quickly as it took off. "I'm not gonna front, I was a damn fool," he admits. "I was buying everything. When you first get on, you tend to have an attitude like [money's] coming and it's always gonna come. But that's not true."

Named after a fire-fighting uncle, Case Woodard always wanted to be a star. And like many young brothers in the 'hood, the Brooklyn-bred bad boy

looked to athletics ("I thought I was [football legend] Lynn Swann," he says) and music. In the mid-to-late '70s, his father, Earl, belted out tunes with a successful local R&B soul band. But having dealt with the pitfalls of the biz, Papa Dukes didn't exactly encourage his baby boy to pursue a music career.

When the family moved to Mount Vernon, N.Y.—and Case was 17—things got hectic. The high school

**"Just picture it:
You go from being
dead broke and
then you're making
10 G's to sing for
10 minutes,"
says Case.**

dropout was hit with a parental ultimatum: Get a job or get Case chose to pack his bags. After two years of crashing on random sofas and a half-assed stab at "hustling," Case got a job with the New York City Housing Authority, fixing elevators in the projects.

"I worked there for a year and half," says Case. "One day, I punched out and never went back. A month later, my girl found out she was pregnant." He pauses as if still overwhelmed by the drama. "But the funny thing was that in New York city jobs you don't get fired right away. My niggas was like, Just go back. I didn't get the ax until three months later."

Still determined to make it, Case went Mr. Mom, looking after Lil' Case during the day and hitting the studios at night; his baby's mother paid the bills. After a year of close calls and background singing gigs for Al B. Sure!, Case signed a production deal with Kenny "Smoove" Kornegay's (formerly of the loverman ensemble Intro) Spoiled Rotten Music. Which is amazing, when you consider the fact that the pair, earlier, had serious personal beef. "A few years back, we had a fight," Case says with a scowl. It turns out they both "knew" the same woman. Then Russell Simmons came to the table. Case remains the last artist that Simmons himself signed to Def Jam.

Despite Case's good fortune, things would eventually fall apart. Although "Touch Me Tease Me" (featuring Foxy Brown) was one of the hottest joints of '96, it did more for Def Jam's *The Nutty Professor* soundtrack than his career. And then there was his relationship with Mary J. Blige. "One of the first questions out of anybody's mouth when I did interviews was 'You going out with Mary?'" he says. Although he's still willing to field questions about his ex, Case feels that things have been blown out of proportion. "My life didn't start with her or end with her," he says. "I always pick the wrong girl."

Case says his self-titled debut (Def Jam, 1996) was also plagued by bad decisions. He blames the LP's failure on creative differences he and Smoove had. "Whenever the recording process is disjointed," says Brim, "that usually results in a brick. People left Case for dead, but I believed in him."

And the Caseman is anxious to dead the one-hit-wonder talk. "My first album debuted at No. 7 and kept falling," says the boisterous baldhead. "This time, it debuted at No. 6 and is still in the Top 10 after six weeks. This album is close to gold, and I can't wait to tell all the critics to kiss my ass." Case closed. □

A FORMAL AFFAIR

*There comes a time for boys to grow up, to find their place in the community, to take their turn with tradition and ritual. Photographers Barron Claiborne and Carl Posey take a trip down South to capture the vibe at a rather unique event—a Kappa Alpha Psi **beautillion**—and find gentility in seven young, gentle men. Text by Karen Good*

There is no welcome like the southern welcome. It is a warm reception of rhythm, humor, and graciousness. The articulations are careful and respectful; the manner, engaging and loose: *Beaux and belles, family and friends, brothers, sisters, and Masons, we salute! To all those in protocol and all those I don't know to call, welcome!*

On March 20, 1999, in Chapel Hill, N.C., at the 15th annual Beautilion Militaire Leadership Training and Scholarship Program, seven young men are presented to society. Herewith Kemo Cannady, J. Marcus Gibbs, Robert Heidt III, Christopher Hedges, Brandon Pierce, Edwin J. Smith, and Charles Thompson III. *Welcome.*

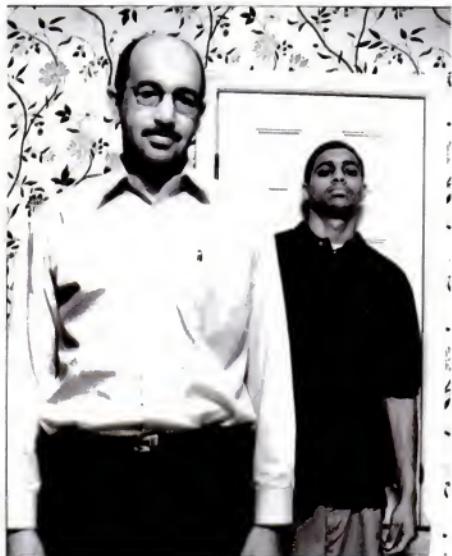
Sponsored by the Durham, N.C., alumni chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., these young men have, for several months, attended weekly meetings and workshops focusing on coming-of-age and community. They raise money for scholarships and, as a sort of celebration of their commitment, take part in a ball or beautillion (think: male debutant). The experience is educational, preparatory. Or maybe it's just—as my cousin Fred, a former beau himself, calls it—"a bourgeois-ass rite of passage."



(Left couple) Constance R. Jones and Charles Thompson III; (right couple) Mundi Massenburg and Robert Heidt III

(Left to right) Edwin J. Smith, Keno Cannady, J. Marcus Gibbs,
Brandon Pierce, Charles Thompson III (seated)





Above: Charles Thompson Jr. (left) and Charles Thompson III. Bottom right: Longtime Kappa member Mr. Dossie Jones

Such is the historical, perhaps justifiable, perception of the black and upwardly mobile. (Not to mention that they call themselves "pretty boys," these men of Kappa Alpha Psi, as they call their red "crimson," and twirl canes when they step.) But this here is about ritual and real work, an opportunity for elder men to bond with those 20, 30, even 50 years their junior, and to present the question, What are the requirements of community?

In the ballroom of the Morehead Planetarium, Dossie Jones is sitting quietly with friends, fraternity, and his wife of five decades. A fine cane rests alongside his lap. A member of Kappa Alpha Psi and a mentor this year to J. Marcus Gibbs, Mr. Jones makes this feel like the head table with his mere presence. He has the kind of ease that can only come with having lived 75 years. The retired Mutual Life Insurance agent (worked there "39 years, 11 months, and 13 days") looks good in his suit (he wears one every day, even in the summer) and mahogany-brown wing tips. He is of a different time, one in which life consisted of home, church, and school. He's decided that this will be his last year in the program, and he's wondering what pearls he will pass on to Marcus. "I will always try to check on his progress. I'll do so until he graduates college, long as I'm still alive."

The speaker of the evening, Dr. Charles Johnson, professor emeritus at the Duke University School of Medicine, commences, and the beaux are introduced one by solemn one. Tonight, parents, achievements, interests, and goals are acknowledged and celebrated by all. The young men will pursue paths that vary from engineering to the arts. The members of the audience stand in ovation as their brothers/cousins/sons walk toward the stage. Wait-





ing in the wings, the beaux whisper and wink to each other, like brothers do. "Give 'em some of dat *GQ*." This is a formal affair.

The young women who have come as escorts loosen their combs and combs to decorate their hair with butterfly clips of turquoise and silver. They dance and curtsy in goddess-white dresses. Oh, how they shine! Since a few of them are of Durham's Peace Missionary Baptist Church Choir members, playtime might find them breaking into song: *It's gonna rain / It's gonna rain / You betta get ready / And bear this in mind / God told Noah / About the rainbow sign / No more water / Fire next time!*

Which brings us back to the occasion: Freedom work. Advancement of the race. Negotiating a nation. Self-reliance and self-determination. Education is prioritized. This is the message from the elders who lindy-hopped, passed on to the young men who love hip hop. If they must face the times that try men's souls, they will be ready.

Toward the evening's end, Charles Thompson III is named Mr. Beaufillion 1999. He is given—no, has earned, by superior fund-raising—a medallion and a \$7,200 scholarship. *First I would like to thank the Lord for giving me two wonderful parents, for allowing me to participate in this program.* He asks his aunts—real and play—to stand; they've traveled far. This fall, Charles will attend Morehouse College in Atlanta; his girlfriend, Constance, will stay here in North Carolina. The tides of change are rolling in, but tonight, when they dance, you know they are in love.

The Kappa officers ask Charles's parents to speak. Charles steps away from the podium and watches his mother, Marian, and father stand. His father's head is kept low as he brushes away tears. The son is struck. "That was the second time in my whole life," he will later say, "maybe the first, that I've seen him feelin' it." He looks at his father, who is so proud and too full for words, and falls silent. Marian will speak tonight to family and friends, to the men

At the 15th Annual Beaufillion Militaire Leadership Training and Scholarship Program, Chapel Hill, N.C., March 20, 1999. (From left) Edwin J. Smith, Maisha Jackson, Charles Thompson III (background), J. Marcus Gibbs, Constance R. Jones, Jola Nunn, Robert Held III, Christopher Hodges, Christyn Meekins, Brandon Pierce, Allyson Silver



Christy Meekins and Christopher Hodges



(Left to right)
Brandon Pierce and
Allyson Silver with
Jessica McGee and
Keno Cannady



Above: (Left to right)
Muriel Masonburg,
Meisha Jackson,
Constance R. Jones,
Allison Silver,
Joi Nunn.
Right: Mable Wheeler
with her son Keno
Cannady

in tuxedos and best suits, and women in red, silky dresses and fur stoles. She will tell the news that Charles Thompson III is her son, and she is so blessed.

Before Marian married and birthed two boys, she didn't really believe, or perhaps understand, the mythic plight of young black men: that people are still afraid of the dark. "I thought the problem was poverty, children not having parents to take care of them," she says. "Well, we aren't in poverty. We're educated. And our kids face the same things. I learned that it doesn't matter how much money or education you have. It's difficult, but I still try to be positive. Things like this help."

And so, here comes the son, and the changing dawn of realization that always occurs when a rite of passage is completed. After the elders bid success, Godspeed, and cue up Chic's "Good Times," the seven young men seek each other to exchange congratulatory grips. Fraternity sticks like marrow in their bones. "We've got a bond now," says Robert, whose eyes are bright with understanding. In quiet hours he has asked himself, *Am I my brother's keeper?* His answer tonight, surely forever: *Yes, I am.*

Gentlemen, present your hand. □



BEAUTILLION BALL WINNERS:
Constance R. Jones and Charles Thompson III



UPTOWN SATURDAY NIGHT

From Milan to Seventh Avenue, Harlem is in vogue again.

Photographs by Arnaldo Anaya-Lucca; Styling by Emil Wilbekin

Ghetto fab is about shining. Flossing. Being raw and glamorous. Real and put-together. Uptown ghetto style has a certain sensibility that says, *There's something about me. If you don't know, now you know.* Like stepping out of a platinum 600 Benz with your velour sweat suit, your Calvin Klein tank, and your Prada boots. The Benz's seats are creamy butter leather. The rims are sparkling like the platinum fronts you broke out for the occasion.

It's all about the details. Colors must be *on point*. It's not just the three-button Armani suit that makes you fly, it's the accessories: the right Kangol brim, the right Fendi bag, the right Dolce & Gabbana shoes, the

right icy Rolex, the color of the stripes on those shell-toe Adidas—these are the details that let you know, when he walks into the room, whether he's a playa or not. It's about the choices.

People today know how to make stylish choices because they have lots of time to dream. *If I had that job I would get that Benz with those rims.... If I had that suit, I'd rock it with those Tims and that Yankees hat turned 45 degrees to the left. What?!* Ghetto fab is a spirit: It's Mary J. Blige, it's R. Kelly, it's Puff Daddy. It's probably most of you reading this.

Andre Harrell, President, Bad Boy Entertainment; Founder, Uptown Entertainment.

Gray denim down vest
and gray patrol bib ski
pants, both by RLX
Polo Sport; watch
by Chevy Suburban
by Chevy Truck;
Face & Body
Fragrance, Polo Sport
by Ralph Lauren

RLX
POLO SPORT

VISU 210

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Black hooded neoprene sweatshirt, gray nylon drawstring pants, and white cotton tank top, all by Brioni
Armani; boots

Treatment watch by Patek Philippe;
portable CD player by AWEI;
headphones by Sony.

Face & Body: Pier
grande lacquer
Glossy Giorgio
Armani



Yellow beaded bustier
and burgundy fur micro-
miniskirt, both by Dolce &
Gabbana; shoes by Yves
Saint Laurent; hat by
Peggy Novick at Showroom Seven;
brown long-sleeve
sequined and
embroidered T-shirt,
herringbone pants with
black leather pants underneath,
and boots, all by
Dolce & Gabbana; leather
visor by Kangol.
Face & Body: Fragrances,
D&G Dolce & Gabbana,
Feminine and Masculine

Black cotton zip-up ribbed vest
with diamond-cut piping.
Black stretch zip-up pullover with
a crew-neck shirt, belt, boots, all
by Versace. Black leather jacket by
Versace. Black leather pants by
Versace. In front: black and blue
cotton camouflage-print army
parachute-style jacket by Helmut Lang.
Black leather pants with belt by
Dolce & Gabbana. Black leather jacket
and black leather pants by
Versace. Black leather pants with belt
by Versace. All by Versace.





Black sheer evening
dress with fur trim by
Gianfranco Ferré.
Face & Body - Wet
cream lip gloss in
No. 2001 by Versace;
fragrance, V E Versace
Eau de Parfum



Black sleeveless, one-shoulder top, black wool micro-miniskirt with slits, black bra, and blue satin beaded waist belt, all by Dolce & Gabbana; boots by Giuseppe Zanotti; necklace, plumes by Nekita; charcoal ribbed halter top with lace hem, brown lace micro-miniskirt with light blue and green embroidery, and boots, all by Dolce & Gabbana; fur coat by Patrick Robinson; gold hoop earrings by Robert Lee Morris; diamond watch by EBEL.

Blue silk beaded tube top and pale blue parachute pants, both by Emporio Armani; bag by Paige Novick at Showroom Seven; watch by EBEL; black opaque vest with micro-fleece lining and dark cotton interlock pants, both by Prada Sport; watch by Tag Heuer; diamond stud earring by Fred Leighton; ML 430 by Mercedes Benz. SEE THE DETAILS

trick daddy

There is nothing sexier than a tailored, fitted classic designer suit. Dress it up or down, and it can go from conservative to creative—depending on how you trick it.

*Photographs by Barron Claiborne;
Styling by Emil Wilbekin*

Black three-button suit,
white button-down shirt,
and black tie, all by DKNY;
hat by Markins; watch by
IWC; suede wristband by
Jutta Neumann

*Black wool long jacket,
black wool zippered pants,
and navy wool crewneck
top, all by COSTUME
NATIONAL HOMME; shoes
by Donna Karan; sunglasses
by Ray-Ban; gloves by
Reebok; watch by IWC*





*Black wool three-button
suit by Sandy Dalat; cream
wide-neck cashmere sweater
by Nova USA; hat by Nike.
Face & Body: Duo-Chrome
Eye Shadow in Black and
Lip Gloss in Nico, both by
M.A.C.; fragrance, Oscar for
Men by Oscar de la Renta*



Black single-breasted three-button suit and off-white silk shirt, both by Cerruti; hat by Mankimo; wristband by Shad. Face & Body: Ultra Facial Moisturizer by Kiehl's; fragrance, L'Homme D'Yach. SEE THE DETAILS

V STYLE

GAMER RECOGNIZE GAMER

Sports are such a source of big-time commercial entertainment, we thought we'd let you preview some new fall gear—all worn by street athletes playing sports you probably won't see on TV.

Photographs by Arnaldo Anaya-Lucca; Styling by Kadi Agüeros

From left: Heather twill-knit military crew-neck shirt with nylon patches by Avirex; green nylon cargo pants and sneakers, both by Nike; cream cotton sweat suit by PNB; white tank top by Fruit of the Loom; khaki cargo pants by Triple S Soul; boots by Timberland; The Player triple-threat velour jacket and pants, both by AND 1

From left: Black and red, "tip mode" fence jacket by Pure Playz; button-down T-shirt by Enyce; plaid shorts over-the-knee sweater by FUBU; denim jeans by FUBU; sneakers by Nike; denim workman coveralls by FUBU; striped with gray neck cardigan by Sean John; button-down jacket by FUBU; gray long-sleeve shirt by Aquatex; Marley sunglasses

**"It's the Spanish dude Mr. Babalou droppin' jewels / Playin' dominoes
at the table sayin' capice." —Cuban Linx**



From left: Heavy cotton-blend fleece-blocked warm-up jacket with embroidered logo by Aweaz; black denim jeans by PNB; boots by Timberland; PNB; fleece button-up long-sleeve shirt by Sean John; wool cargo pants (part of wool suit) by REI; sweatshirt by Nike; blue FUBU NBA sweater-vest, white screen T-shirt, and denim jeans, all by FUBU; sneakers by Nike; Kuchira jacket by The North Face; Doc Jay basic jeans by Mecca; boots by Timberland



**"When I roll four, five, six,
they go we know, so I collect
my cash then slide, I got my
back, my guns by my side /
It shouldn't have to be like
that, I guess it ain't where
you're from, it's where
you're at." —Rakim**

From left: Black classic cotton hooded sweater and pants, both by Champion; shoot-around sweatshirt and pants, both by PNB; boots by Timberland; black suede leather jacket and suede cargo pants, both by Emce; black three-quarter leather shirt by Groove; white T-shirt by Fruit of the Loom; black carpenter jeans by PNB; boots by Timberland; black sweatshirt and pants by Willie Esco; white T-shirt by PNB; My World fleece pants by AND 1; sneakers by Nike.
SEE THE DETAILS

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After all that dueling drama between these two boyfriends, Whitney needed a moment. It was so crazy. She couldn't even believe it herself. How? Why? Now paparazzi are stalkin' her—and visibly she can run home to New York City, she can't hide.

Ranunc miniskirt by Bill Kays Furs; blazer/skirt stretch knit jacket with mock-neck collar by Calvin Klein Collection; blouse/camisole tube top (worn as miniskirt) by Calvin Klein Underwear; shorts by Fortune Valentino; orange suede messenger bag by Lumberjack Tracy Scott; scarf and sunglasses, body by PENDLETON; luggage by Louis Vuitton

SCANDAL!

WHITNEY PORSCHE. You know the name. It's in the headlines of every international newspaper and on the cover of every magazine. And the question buzzing around the cocktail-party circuit, among the recording-studio set, throughout the fashion world, and at every Mr. Chow banquet is the same: *How could she?*

Photographs by Marc Baptiste; Styling by Emil Wilbekin



AT EQUA
LIVING
A BRAVA
D
H
I
P LiL
ad Revenda
TIME
HELMUT

Shopping always wins when one's in that lonely, depressed mode. Whitney runs into the Helmut Lang store to pick up a couple of cashmere tank tops, some gold leaf-pleated jeans, and a sequined arm pouch. Next stop: Aveda for an herbal treatment.

Stone polyurethane coat with fur lining, white cotton jersey tank top, black leather classic biker pants, and sunglasses, all by Helmut Lang. Face & Body: Super Lustrous Lipstick and Wet/Dry Eye Shadow in Jungle Fever, both by Revlon.

Red belted wool and alpaca single-button jacket and red belted wool and alpaca single-pleat blouse: both by Richard Tyler Couture; mcs by Fortunata Valentino; bag by Lamberton Traub; Fawn & Body; Yves Saint Laurent Baby Nail Lacquer by Givenchy; fragrance, Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche Eau de Parfum.

Red belted wool and alpaca single-button jacket and red belted wool and alpaca single-pleat blouse: both by Richard Tyler Couture; mcs by Fortunata Valentino; bag by Lamberton Traub; Fawn & Body; Yves Saint Laurent Baby Nail Lacquer by Givenchy; fragrance, Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche Eau de Parfum.

Black hand-beaded top, aqua hand-embroidered skirt, and shoes, all by Tuleh



Whitney stops by Tuleh to congratulate her designing friends Josh Patner (right) and Bryan Bradley (left). They just won the Council of Fashion Designers of America's Perry Ellis Award for Womenswear. After being fitted for her fall order, Whitney bares all to the boys, who are shocked!

Black superfine cashmere stretch tube top and black paper radzmire short wrapped train skirt, both by Calvin Klein Collection; shoes by Fortune Valentino; bag by Jamin Puech; 1999 C70 convertible by Volvo.

Face & Body: Rouge Virtuale by L'ORÉAL PARIS; fragrance, ck One by Calvin Klein



Partying is a mood enhancer. Whitney's off to the Costume Institute Ball at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where Puff Daddy will perform. But tonight, it feels like Whitney is the star attraction. Thank God she brought her bodyguard!

A new boo? Whitney gets her groove on with Vikram Chatwal, fine hotelier and eligible bachelor No. 11. While sipping champagne in the lounge at Chatwal's new The Time hotel in New York's Times Square, a tabloid photographer blows up their spot. Not having it!



Foundation leather halter dress and boots, both by Gucci; black stretch cashmere one-button deconstructed blazer, black stretch cashmere pants with western pockets, white cotton V-neck T-shirt, and black patent-leather shoes, all by Gucci.
Face & Body: Hair products by Motions; Lip Gloss in Oh Baby by M.A.C.; fragrance, Gucci Envy

Enough is enough! Whitney is over all these cameras flashing. Outta here! She and her masseur/papi chulo make a mad dash. All these people need to get out of her face—this media frenzy is not cute! A trip to the Caribbean (with her own Latin lover), however, is just what Whitney ordered! (Stay tuned to future issues for more Whitney Porsche melodrama.)



Black leather jacket, black ribbed T-neck shirt, olive wool cargo pants with red stripes, and boots, all by John Bartlett; sunglasses by Web; white sheer shirt, red wool apron skirt, and shoes, all by John Bartlett; luggage by Louis Vuitton; Yorkshire terrier ("Madison"), courtesy of Marvet Britto and the Britto Agency. SEE THE DETAILS

OVATION

HIP HOP'S GODFATHER OF FASHION

After creating the urban sportswear aesthetic 10 years ago, Karl Kani proves he can still kick it—yes, he can.

Thirteen years ago you were a 17-year-old kid from East New York, Brooklyn. You turned your dream into a fashion revolution. You introduced the world to urban style and paved the way for aspiring designers who followed in your footsteps. On this your 10th anniversary, we pay tribute to you, Karl Kani, the fashion guru who started it all—and who can tell us a thing or two about maintaining.

It seems like only yesterday you were selling your baggy jeans and T-shirts on the streets of Brooklyn and, later, out of the trunk of your car in Cali. Hustling your wares became a profession; getting your name out on the streets was your drive. Your motto was rhetorical: "Can I do it?" Karl, Kani?

You announced Karl Kani was here, back in the day when you were down with Cross Colours. Who could forget the first Kani ads featuring you—the ones that would help you amass your big dough—which demonstrated the power of your fierce, calm visage. You also knew the magic words to make your 800 number ring off da hook.

Heavy D recently said, "Before Karl, we were putting [our own] ensembles together before we had ensembles to buy." It seemed like—and still seems like—those Kani baggy jeans with metal belt loops, sweatshirts with metal nameplates, denim-colored coordinates, "bulletproof" fleece sweatshirts, and matching fleece beanie caps made us feel instantly successful. Like we were the flyest on the block. The kid with the most knowledge of style. The person who kept it way real.

Years later, Kani designs specifically made for men and admired by women would expand to include gear for the shorties and ladies too. "I've worn his stuff so much without even thinking about it," actress/singer Tatyana Ali says. "When my clothes have been laid out on my bed, I go for the cutest thing, and it always ends up being Karl Kani." You paved the way for those who came after you and the many who attempt to master your game. With a successful \$65 million business, you are the godfather of urban sportswear.

"Before seeing Karl, it never dawned on me that young African-Americans could control and create fashion," says Daymond John, FUBU CEO, who today is sitting on top of the world with a \$350 million empire he and his partners can call their own. "Not only has Karl opened doors and paved the way for designers such as myself, at the same time he has continued to provide cutting-edge fashion."

We tip our baseball cap to you, Karl Kani. You are the man who had a dream and made it come true. You began your quest with "Can I?" And 10 years later, it's safe to say: Yes, you can.

Elena Romero

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARC BAPTISTE APRIL 28, 1999, CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA



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The Stylist

DESIGNER FASHION

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Independent filmmakers from New York and Los Angeles try on sportswear from **Polo Jeans Co.**'s fall collection and talk about their quest to make movies that matter.

*Photographs by Jane Huntington;
Styling by Kadi Agüeros*

No matter how famous Hollywood directors become, they never forget their first—all the sweat, the tears, the begging. We're talking, of course, about their first great film. It may not have made it to the neighborhood cineplex, but it's the flick that won that first award, got them noticed, and served as a calling card to the big studios. The road to directorial fame is long and difficult, but it's got to start somewhere. SEE THE DETAILS.

Jeannine Amber





JOE HAMERSKY, 36, director/writer

The Project: Hamersky's student film, *Gof'er*, about a guy who gets coffee for construction workers, won him the Polo Ralph Lauren Award for best film at Columbia University's New Works Festival. **Next Big Thing:** Inspired again by the plight of the average Joe, Hamersky is currently shopping his script *Driving Examiner*, about driving instructors in New York City.



STACEY L. HOLMAN, 28, director/writer

The Project: Holman produced, wrote, and directed *Girl Talk*, about a young black woman struggling with a post-college career crisis. **Money Talks:** Can't make a movie without funds, so Holman's biggest coup was enlisting her family to help generate the cash. "Every member of my family threw a fund-raiser for me. It was truly a breakthrough," she says.



BOOKER T. MATTISON, 28, director

The Project: Mattison is ready to hit the festival circuit with his short film *The Gilded Six Bits*, based on the Zora Neale Hurston story of the same name. **Doing the Right Thing:** In 1998, Mattison won the Spike Lee Fellowship at NYU for *Exit 13*, a murder mystery about a bathroom attendant. "Maybe Spike saw me following in his footsteps by taking chances."



EXILE RAMIREZ, 26, producer

The Project: Ramirez recently produced the feature *Just One Time* (Alliance), about a guy's bright idea to have a threesome a week before his wedding. The film is scheduled to debut at the Toronto Film Festival this month. **From Whence He Came:** Six years ago, Ramirez was doing the nine-to-five as an AT&T bilingual phone operator (speaking Polish, no less).



MALCOLM D. LEE, 29, director/writer

The Project: After five screenplays and 11 years paying his dues, Lee has just finished directing his first studio feature, *The Best Man (Universal)*. The night-before-the-wedding-hasco flick, starring Taye Diggs and Nia Long, is set to hit theaters this October. **Personal Best:** "I just moved out of my parents' basement last January," says Lee.



LISA COLLINS, 30, writer/director/producer

The Project: Three years in the making, Lisa Collins's *Tree Shade*, about a girl coming to terms with her family's history, won her the Gold Award for Best Student Alternative Film from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences this year. **Her Life as Art:** Collins, who made ends meet while making *Tree Shade* by managing a club, cast a "gender illusionist" in a starring role.





ERIC DANIEL, 32, writer/director

The Project: Daniel's screenplay *Brushback*, about a cocky baseball player who gets hit in the head and wakes up as a player in the Negro Leagues, has been optioned by Overbrook, Will Smith's production company. **Back to His Roots:** After slogging it out as a Hollywood screenwriter, Daniel is making *Static*, about a hectic night with two New York City cops.



GRACE QUEK, 27, director

The Project: Quek was a hit at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival in *Sex: The Annabel Chong Story*, a documentary about Quek's work as an adult-film star. In response, Quek is writing, directing, and starring in *Sex Goes on Vacation*. "My film is more tongue-in-cheek," she says. "The idea is that I'm making movies about sex, when really I have no social life whatsoever."



JAY LOWI, 29, director

The Project: Lowi's *12 Stops on the Road to Nowhere*, a comedy about a guy who picks up a strange girl, won the Audience Award for Best Short Film at the really indie Slamdance Film Festival. **Doing Hollywood:** Lowi recently got himself an agent. "My philosophy," he says with a big grin, "is good people, good material. But," he adds, "I stole that."



AURA JOHNSON, 27, director/writer

The Project: Still a thesis film away from graduating from UCLA's film program, Johnson won the Jack Nicholson Distinguished Student Director Award for *Constellation 8*, about a mother and daughter's strained relationship. **She'll Take What She Can Get:** "I really like the autonomy of independent film," says Johnson. "Of course, I wouldn't say no to a studio job."



GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD, 30, director

The Project: After five years of writing for television, Prince-Bythewood has made it to the big screen with *Love and Basketball* (New Line), starring Omar Epps, Alfre Woodard, and Sanaa Lathan. **Almost Stuck in the Tube:** "I was writing for television," Prince-Bythewood says. "It's easy to get complacent in TV. You write something, and a week later it's shot."



RODNEY CHARLES, 30 actor/writer

The Project: Charles most recently played Charla, a cameraman, in Mike Figgis's *The Loss of Sexual Innocence* (Sony, 1999). **His Divine Callings:** Charles, who believes his future in film was "preordained before I was even born," just finished filming the lead in Jorge Ingles's *Paulie Charmed the Sleeping Woman*, a love story about a jazz musician.

GEAR

THE REAL GOODS

history

They say you can tell a lot about a man by what's on his dresser—and what's in his drawers. What kind of shape are you in? Come on, let go of that picture frame your last boo gave you for Valentine's 1982. And please don't get caught with that old raggedy leather wallet or that nasty drugstore cologne. Get rid of those old tricks and check out these new toys. —Angela Ambrolo

1. BeoSound 4000 stereo by Bang & Olufsen (speakers not shown) 2. Grapefruit Deluxe Hand and Body Lotion, Hair Conditioner and Grooming Aid, the Ultimate Men's After shave and All Day Moisturizer, and Close Shavers the Ultimate Brushless Shave Cream, all by Kiehl's 3. Napa calf travel case by Calvin Klein 4. Picture frame by Gucci 5. 8800 series cellular phone by Nokia 6. Leather box by Coach 7. Cassiopela e-105 electronic organizer by Casio 8. Seamless boxer brief by Polo Ralph Lauren 9. Cigar cutter and case by Coach 10. Money clip by Gucci 11. Titanium Pocket Tech knife by Wenger Genuine Swiss Army Knives 12. Sterling silver key ring by COSTUME NATIONAL 13. Silvering and cuff links by Kenneth Cole 14. Playboy lighter by Zippo™ 15. Classique ballpoint pen and Platinum Leather business card holder by Montblanc 16. Eliro watch by Movado 17. Aviator sunglasses by Kenneth Cole 18. Perpetual calendar by Calvin Klein Home 19. 1999 SmartKey by Mercedes-Benz 20. Ties by Hermès 21. BOSS Hugo Boss fragrance by Hugo Boss 22. Calais dresser by Grange. SEE THE DETAILS



SCOOP food for fierce fashionistas

The motorcycle influence on fashion (leather, zippers, padding) has Donna Karan racing for more. DKNY hooked up with the real-deal Ducati Motor Spa to design an exclusive men's collection of motorcycle-inspired clothing. Watch out for all the goods—leather jackets and pants, jeans, outerwear, and more—at flagship DKNY and Ducati stores in New York and London. Speaking of becoming partners, former supermodel Iman and Miley Elliott are teaming up to create the MISDEMEANOR lipstick. As part of IMAN cosmetics, a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the bronzy-peach lipstick will benefit Break the Cycle, a nonprofit organization to help

end domestic violence by working with the kids [see VIBE Confidential, page 132]. It's really so easy to give: Zara Casualties, a sportswear company promoting "nonviolent" urban wear—which doesn't look so bad with neutral-colored jerseys, hoodies, and shorts—gives 7 percent of all profits to inner-city programs to help "keep the peace."

BITE BITE E-style: For all of you over-the-top shoppers, check out LuxuryFinder.com, whether you're hot to buy a 10-grand home gym from Gynesspo.com or a \$12 million jet. If you can't find what you need, a personal shopper is always online to help. A.A.

sneak peek

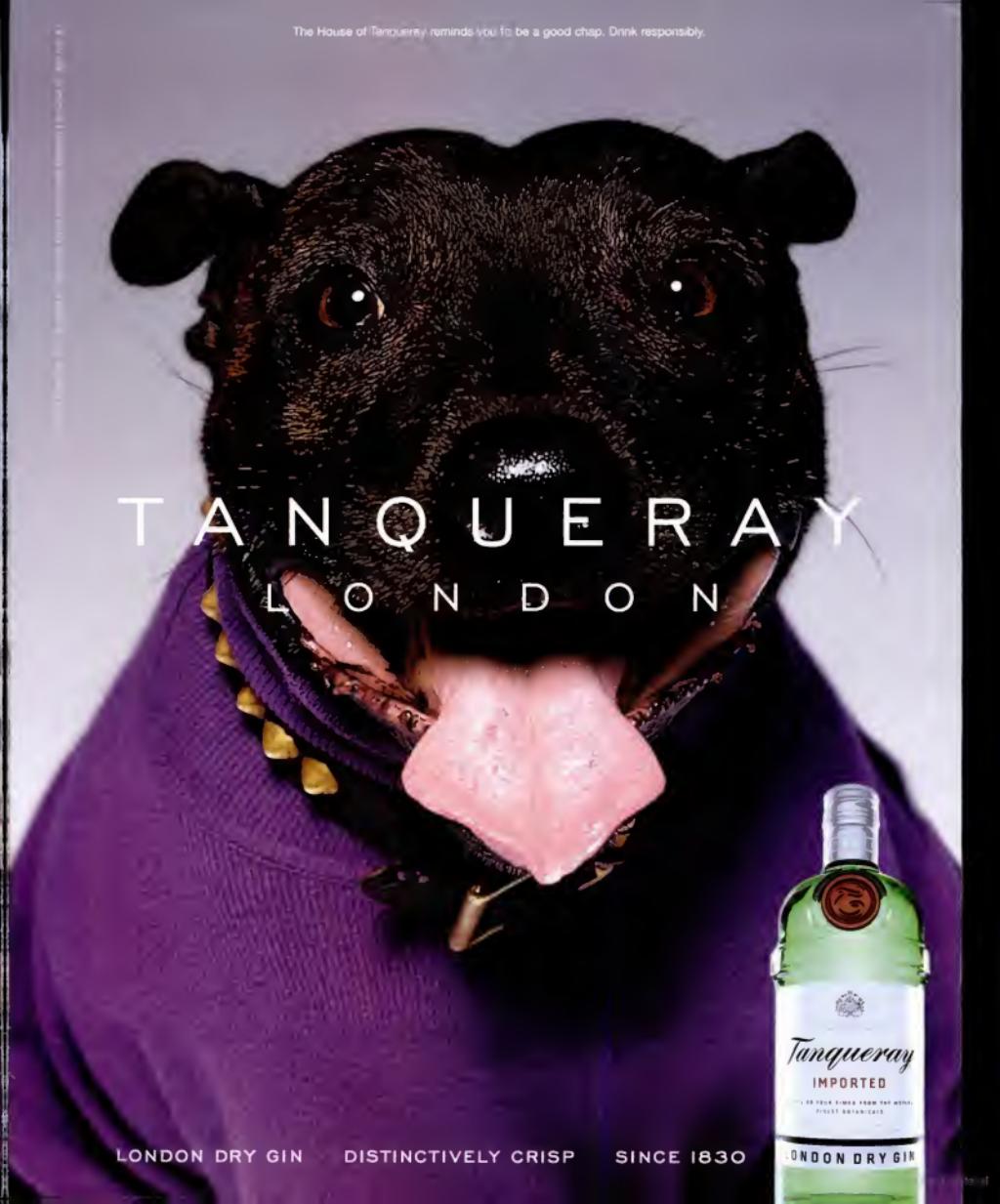
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Mimi Valdes



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SMOOTH EXOTIC GIN

VIVID TASTE

ORIGINAL 1839 RECIPE

Glam Rap

Once upon a time, there weren't a lot of female rappers in the game," says **Rah Digga**, the twenty-something, ferocious lady lyricist of the Flip-mode Squad. "Now, a lot more females are getting respect." And a lot of female rappers are holding on to their feminine mystique while still flowing over phat beats. Salt-N-Pepa, Yo Yo, Lil' Kim, and Foxy Brown may be the standard-bearers for hardcore glamour rap, but there's a whole new school of female MCs, and they are definitely in the game—and hot on the high heels of their predecessors.

"People are into women doing their thing right now," says **Solé**, 26, who blew up the "Who Dat?" single with J.T. Money and is releasing her debut, *Skin Deep* (DreamWorks), this month. "It's okay for us to look like this and still be taken seriously."

Gone are the tomboyish female MCs from back in the day, when it was an unspoken rule that if you wanted to be considered as good as a male MC, you had to emulate his stance. Now, women in hip hop can be whoever they wanna be. "I feel like it's outrageous!" says **Trina**, 24, the woman who literally kicked down the door in Trick Daddy's "No Name" video. "A lot of female rappers are coming out and getting support. The women are strong and get to be out front," Trina says. "It's our turn to shine, instead of being in the back." And shine they are, glittering in diamonds and glistening in lip gloss.

"It's about time," agrees

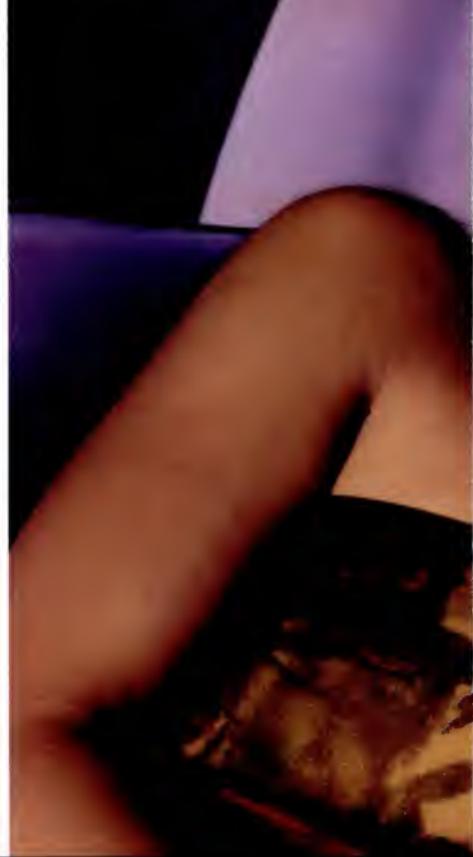
Mocha, 18, the Missy/Timbaland crew member who helped Nicole "Make It Hot" last year and whose as-yet-untitled debut album is about to drop. "The females comin' out are as nice as the males, if not better. The guys are being themselves, so why can't the women?" says Mocha. "An artist should be judged as an artist regardless of their sex."

In rap, like in most industries, there's an old-boys network (even if the old boys are 25). But it's women who flock to concerts en masse, who support the brothers and their posses, and who want to hear their own stories reflected in hip hop. "I think it's hot," says Philadelphia's **Charli Baltimore**, 26, who recently released her debut album, *Feel It* (Entertainment/Epic). "We've come a long way, but we got a long way to go, 'cause the guys still discriminate. That makes it all the better that we're doin' it like women," says Charli. "We get to be feminine, but still spit our lyrics."

As part of the Ruff Ryders camp, **Eve** knows better than anyone does what it's like to be the femme fatale among the fellas. "It's about time," says Eve, 21, who is expected to release her first solo album this month. "We still have a long way to go so people can stop saying 'female MC.' We need respect! I don't have to be a man. I can be raunchy like my dogs," she says, "but sometimes I can just be a woman. You don't have to be a guy to spit hard."

—Eni Wibekin

Solé: Rust double-layer mini tube dress by Plain Sud. **Eve:** Teal ribbed-for-intensity top by COSTUME NATIONAL. **Face & Body:** All makeup by Tommy Hilfiger Color. **Fast Talk Lip Conditioning Lip Gloss:** *Smooth Operator*; **Small Talk Lip Pencil in Scoop and Call Me;** **Smooth Talk Conditioner:** *Smooth Talk, Concerto, R&B, and Doo Wop; Double Feature Well/Dry Eye Color in Spiritual and Peaceful; Retro-Liner Liquid Eye Pencil in Vintage Gold and Volumizing Lash Color in All That Black; Borderline Eye Pencil in NYC; Glow for It Crease Color in Excited and Skin Tone; New Hall Color in Bikini (on Trina); Sapphire (on Mocha); Acetate (on Trina); Fragrance, Freedom for Women by Tommy Hilfiger*





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SINCE 1830

LONDON DRY GIN

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Left to right: *Mocha:*
Black denim rocker
Jean jacket and black
sparkle bootcut jeans,
both by Tommy Jeans;
black camisole by
Balmain; *Tiramisu:*
Black knit tube dress
with knit arm sleeves
by Plain Sud; shoes
by Patrick Cox; *Rash:*
Diggy Red, white, and
blue button-down shirt
and waist-studded jeans,
both by Tommy Jeans;
red lambswool V-neck
sweater by The GAP;
White: vest by Versace; *Half*
Baltimore: Black silk
dress with blue lining
and pink boots, both
by Versus-Versace;
necklace by Ozbek.
SEE THE DETAILS



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LOOK

SCREEN TV WORD TECH



Pras: Rough
and tough
with his
Afro puff

Revenge of the Nerds

In Universal Pictures' big-screen adaptation of the oddball *Mystery Men* comic book (directed by Kinka Usher, whose claim to fame is the "Yo quiero Taco Bell" commercials), a new breed of heroes stands ready (sort of) to fight the forces of evil. Crossbreeding 1998's *There's Something About Mary* (20th Century Fox) with Marvel Comics' *The Fantastic Four*, *Mystery Men* has stupid-cool good guys—like Mr. Furious (Ben Stiller), whose superpowers, well, getting angry; Shoveler (William H. Macy), who's really, really good at burying stuff; and Bowler (Janeane Garofalo), who knocks baddies down like pins at the local lanes—battling the villainous Tony C (Pras, left), a member of the evil Disco Dogs.

It just goes to show you: Every outcast's secret shame can become a superpower if the planets are properly aligned. *Gary Dauphin*

ON THE SET WITH ICE CUBE 250 / L.L.'S BACK 252 / FUTURAMA DRAMA 254
RICKY WILLIAMS TALKS TRASH 256 / B-BOY COMICS 258 / MP3 MUSIC TO GO 260

TASTER'S CHOICE

All the things the stars just can't live without



DAVE CHAPPELLE, comedian, costars as a diamond thief in this month's *Blue Streak* (Columbia) with Martin Lawrence.

Favorite fragrance: Cologne is for stank people. I'm more of a soap-and-water guy. I feel like if you put on soap then cologne, that's just too many smells all mixed together. I wear Muslim oils, though. Sandalwood smells good on me.

Favorite book: Anything reality-based like [the syndicated]

Real TV, *Fox's Cops* and *When Animals Attack*. Just to witness

unsuspecting people right before shit happens is funny.

Favorite laptop: My laptop portable DVD player. It's perfect when you're flying.

And my cell phone, that's my buddy right there.

But I don't even own an electronic phone book or a phone book period. I just have a shoe box full of numbers.



NZINGHA, makeup artist (of the Deborah Martin Agency in N.Y.C.) for Mary J. Blige, Lil' Kim, Lisa Nicole Carson, and Missy Elliott.

Favorite book: *The Seal of the Soul* by Gary Zukav (Simon & Schuster, 1999). I'm reading it this very moment, and I just gave it to my mom for her birthday. It's not fictional; it's about reality and our perceptions of who we are.

Favorite TV show: *Ally McBeal* (Fox). It's all about shady women with issues.

Favorite accessory: A Compaq PC. It's about the size of a wallet, but I'm writing my book on it, believe it or not.

Favorite scent: I don't wear perfumes. I make my own oils. My favorite concoction is ylang-ylang and sandalwood.



WYCLEF JEAN, artist/producer/Fugee, composed his first film score for Eddie Murphy's spring comedy, *Life* (Universal).

Favorite movie: *Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love* (Trimark, 1996). [The title comes from a] book on the art of lovemaking. It's very sensual, almost like a surreal world. I was also trying to listen to the score. What I liked is that in the movie this girl loved this guy so much that he would die for her.

Favorite TV show: *The Sopranos* (HBO). I like the mother character [Livia Soprano], because Moms are driving people crazy sometimes.

Favorite accessory: Motorola StarTAC. It's the itty-bitty one.

Favorite lawn: Jean-Paul Gaultier.



HIA LONG, actress, plays an aggressive TV reporter in the August release *The Best Man* (Universal, 1999) and alongside Giovanni Ribisi in *The Boiler Room* (New Line, 1999).

Favorite accessory: I'm like my mom—we're the worst when it comes to electronic devices. My mother still has a rotary phone! But I have a Nextel i1000 by Motorola (updated i2000 pictured). It's a cell and a walkie-talkie. Stores phone numbers too.

Favorite movie: *Buffalo 66* (Lions Gate Films, 1998), a small independent movie. The message is that love can either make you the most happy or most unfilled.

Favorite TV show: *Sex and the City* (HBO).



READY TO ROLL

FREAKY FRIDAY

On the set with Ice Cube
by Stephen Rebelllo



Flick: *Next Friday* (New Line), set to hit theaters this winter.

Star Plays: Ice Cube (also the writer and producer) and newcomer Mike Epps (no relation to Omar)

Shot Caller: Steve Carr, mentored in the early '90s by mogul Russell Simmons, went on to direct such videos as Jay-Z's "Can I Get A...." It's his first feature flick.

Quick Pitch: Craig Jones (Cube) flees from the South Central hood to the burbs of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., with his cousin Day-Day (Epps), a record-store clerk. There, they face Hispanic gangs, a raging pit bull, and an old Korean woman who speaks "fluent ebonics." Hilarity ensues.

Reason for the Green Light: Duh. "Hood comedy supreme *Friday* (New Line, 1995) came out of nowhere, grossed nearly \$30 million, spent about three years as a Top 100 rental, and helped make a star of Chris Tucker, way before *Rush Hour* (New Line, 1998).

Mission in Action: Chris Tucker, Ester Epps, a *Def Comedy Jam* stand-up, who everyone involved with *Next Friday* optimistically insists will be "the next Chris Tucker."

Set Mascot: A stray dog, often found hanging out by the food truck, who looks as well-fed, forearm, and frenetic as any movie producer.

Grub: Food's a major compensation when you're not shooting on a cool location, which this movie definitely is *not*. So "the best craft-services guy in the business" keeps the crew fat and happy with daily rations of Wheat Thins (four boxes), Pringle's (six cans), Jif peanut butter (two jumbo jars), and five dozen doughnuts.

Best Crew Cap: Crew members flaunt their status by rocking caps featuring the names of the latest project they've worked on. Some folks thought they looked hot in logos from the upcoming films *The Haunting* (Dream Works) and *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle* (Universal). But the clear winner, hands down, was the dude flossing the decimal from TBS's *The Chimp Channel*.

Local Homeowners Weigh In: "I liked *Friday*. Eddie Murphy was in that, right?"

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Cards to press members

screen

gary dauphin's flick picks

movie review

LOVE STINKS (INDEPENDENT ARTISTS)

In this slow-starting comedy, French Stewart (of NBC's *3rd Rock From the Sun*) plays a hapless sitcom writer who gets consumed by a booty call gone bad. After meeting the girl of his dreams (Bridgette Wilson) at the wedding of his two friends (Bill Bellamy and Tyra Banks), Stewart quickly learns that Miss Right is a conniving nut job with a time bomb where her biological clock should be. *Stinks'* predictable plot is given a slight twist by the palefaces who front the film while acting like characters yanked from an "urban market" flick. Then there are the leading ladies' money-grubbing, husband-



hunting, nymphomaniac ways. While there is something laughable about Wilson and Banks pinning their men like a salt-and-pepper tag team, it's an old joke that was barely funny the first time around.

movie review

THE SIXTH SENSE (BUENA VISTA)

Bruce Willis shows his nurturing side in this chilling tale of tortured ghosts and troubled tow-headed tykes. Willis plays Malcolm Crowe, a child psychologist trying to help Cole (Haley Joel Osment), a grade-schooler who is having visions of murder and mayhem from the Other Side. Since Crowe can't

see the baddies himself, he takes up the task of "curing" the boy. The plot twists when Cole starts channeling clues from recent mysterious deaths, and the good doctor is forced to reconsider his patient's profile. This visually spare and elegantly constructed thriller delivers all the standard ghost-story creeps, doling out goose bumps in mounting waves and never letting you know whether what you see (or don't see) is the truth.



see the baddies himself, he takes up the task of "curing" the boy. The plot twists when Cole starts channeling clues from recent mysterious deaths, and the good doctor is forced to reconsider his patient's profile. This visually spare and elegantly constructed thriller delivers all the standard ghost-story creeps, doling out goose bumps in mounting waves and never letting you know whether what you see (or don't see) is the truth.

movie preview

THE WOOD (PARAMOUNT)

After years of playing best supporting brother, Omar Epps steps up as the star of this cop thriller about an undercover Cincinnati narcotics who gets caught up in a bloody war between his boss (Stanley Tucci) and the drug lord he's supposed to sting (L.L. Cool J). The classic deep-cover conundrum plays out with appearances from Jermaine Dupri, Pam Grier, Niya Long, and Nas.



movie preview

TEACHING MRS. TINGLE (DIMENSION)

Cream (Dimension, 1996) screenwriter Kevin Williamson makes his directing debut in this wicked high school comedy. Originally titled *Killing Mrs. Tingle* (before the Columbine horror), the movie centers around a would-be class valedictorian (Katie Holmes of The WB's Dawson's Creek) who must get even with a nasty history teacher (Helen Mirren) after she unfairly accuses Holmes of cheating on an exam.



movie preview

FIGHT CLUB (20TH CENTURY FOX)

Director David Fincher (*Seven*, New Line, 1995) teams up with a gang of Hollywood pretty boys in this psychodrama about a private club dedicated to the art of the beat-down. Edward Norton and Brad Pitt play the founders of this post-frat organization where yuppie drink merrily and engage in human cockfights. Things get ugly, though, when the pals all fall for the same knockout (Helena Bonham Carter).



REEL TO REAL

NEWS FROM THE HOLLYWEIRD

by Stephen Rebello

Britney Spears and Freddie Prinze Jr.



With the new century bearing down on Hollywood like a runaway comet, it's high time we put on our magic swami hats and predict the coming decade's showbiz trends by perusing the latest Hollywood news and rumors.

Item: Ryan Phillippe, the pouty, penulant, and pretty twenty-something who starred in the insipid *Cruel Intentions* (Columbia, 1999), signed a lucrative pact as a producer with Intermedia, a company that has deals with Sean Connery and Kevin Costner.

Future Trend: With teen-obsessed Hollywood trying to cement production deals for the likes of Freddie Prinze Jr., Jennifer Love Hewitt, Sarah Michelle Gellar, and Brandy, expect a slew of movies about beautiful rich kids who get more than they deserve.

Item: Jewel is about to appear in the Civil War romance *Ride With the Devil* (Universal, 1999); members of the pop group All Saints are shooting a crime flick called *Honest* (Winchester, 2000); and Lauryn Hill, Ricky Martin, and Britney Spears are all being courted as potential big-screen stars.

Future Trend: Like Madonna, keep changing your act so people don't get sick of you. But watch out for possible disasters—like why are Ewan McGregor and Nicole Kidman starring in a musical directed by Baz Luhrmann (*Romeo + Juliet*, 20th Century Fox, 1996), instead of people who can actually sing and dance?

Item: Recently, a staple of any great comedy has been the obligatory masturbation reference, from *There's Something About Mary*'s (20th Century Fox, 1998) cream rinse to *American Pie*'s (Universal, 1999) dessert debacle.

Future Trend: Hollywood brought the most private sex act, with all its glory and goop, to the screen. Now watch for the pendulum to swing back to restrained couples who keep their hands where they belong—on each other.

Item: Paramount Pictures is planning a movie based on the best-selling computer game *Tomb Raider*, featuring that busty, brainy, heroine Lara Croft, and Fox Animation is working on *Fathom*, based on the best-selling comic book about a busty, brainy heroine.

Trend: Now that top female stars like Julia Roberts and Demi Moore are getting up to \$20 million per film, expect special-effects technicians to computer-generate a slew of impossibly beautiful low-maintenance sex symbols. These cyborgs won't demand studios, put their personal trainers on payroll, or bitch about the size of their trailers. Best of all, they work cheap.

**MMM...
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SIZED.**



MATT GROENING

BITE MY BUTTERFINGER!



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Digital Color

tv + monitor

OOH BABY, WE WATCH IT RAW

But is TV making entertainment too real?

Keepin' it real has long been de rigueur in rap, but now the same can be said of American television. A decade after Fox's *Cops* introduced viewers to the arresting world of video vérité, reality shows are bigger than ever. From the educational *Escape/ Because Accidents Happen* (PBS) to the syndicated *Real TV*, reality seems to rule. Even NBC, which previously insisted it would never go that route, now has *The World's Most Amazing Videos*. The popularity of reality TV is easy to explain, says *Cops* creator John Langley. For one, the programs boast production costs that are shockingly low vis-à-vis sitcoms and dramas. Plus, he says, "the drama of reality will always outdo the drama of fiction."

But with jail and zoo breakouts quickly becoming camcorder clichés—and with recent Supreme Court rulings outlawing the filming of certain police searches and arrests—where will it end? Consider *Metropolis*, a new show the Sci-Fi Channel is developing with music-video director Spike Jonze. Featuring two cops who investigate paranormal crimes, the futuristic thriller will be shot in the gritty, on-the-street style of *Cops*. Laments Langley, "I've been ripped off so many times that I feel like Velcro."

TOO-REALS TO REMEMBER

• **Real-world classic:** Fox's *Cops* (1989–present). Set to a reggae soundtrack, bad boys do dirt, and boys in blue do their job (at least while the camera's on).

• **Too-real catastrophe:** O.J. and Al Cowlings stiff-arm the LAPD (June 17, 1994). *When Football Legends Flew*.

• **Real-world classic:** MTV's *The Real World* (1992–present). Seven young heads leave everybody else's reality behind to live rent-free in a fully loaded pad.

• **Too-real catastrophe:** Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee's hot home-sex video (1996). Fully loaded newlyweds give each other head.

• **Real-world classic:** HBO's *Thug Life In D.C.* (1999). Crazy Audrey's thug life gets him 25 years to life. His younger brother, Kevin, goes the gangsta rap route.

• **Too-real catastrophe:** Tupac's thug life in Las Vegas (Sept. 7, 1996). Casino cameras capture Tupac's posse mobbing Orlando Anderson on the night of Pac's fatal shooting. *J. Freedom du Lac*



FROM ROCK BOX TO HARD KNOCK

A slew of new shows may help MTV ease into a new season



Star & Buc Wild: Bringing *The Beat Suite* ruckus

Heavy D was a sign of something big. This spring, when the Overweight Lover reprised his role as telegenic teddy bear for MTV (as a guest *Jams VJ*), it was just the latest indication that the megastar had nuttin' but love for hip hop. In March, MTV aired its first Hip Hop Week and the rap-ton *Station Zero*. And in June, *The Beat Suite*, hosted by Brooklyn's Star & Buc Wild, brought New York street cred to MTV's burgeoning rap and R&B programming.

"This is the place to be, man," Star says of the global cable powerhouse. "We want little Katie out in Bozeman, Mont., to be a Star & Buc Wild fan!" That's an understatement for MTV, which will continue to launch more street-flavored fare in order to cash in on rap's mainstream popularity. *Hip Hop Nation*, a nightly half-hour program that focuses on style and trends, is scheduled to debut in the fall. Its pilot featured Mos Def and Funkmaster Flex as hosts. "We've gotta take it to the next level," says Tom Calderone, senior vice president of music and talent at MTV. "It makes the audience know that we're connected."

THE VIDEO VANGUARD

How are the other music stations protecting their turf?

BET: "We're chasing hip hop to the end of the earth," says Craig Henry, senior producer of the decade-old *Rap City*.

Recently, such efforts have taken the show's producers to lands as far away as Alaska. BET also recently acquired former MTV exec Stephen Hill as its vice president of music programming.

THE BOX: Bought out this spring by MTV Networks, The Box continues to operate independently—for now. Unique in tailoring its programming to specific markets and letting viewers choose videos. Local focus allows more indie airplay.

Corey Takahashi

SITE BITE

WHO: PSEUDO.COM

WHERE: www.pseudo.com

WHAT: Online network you can watch like TV, listen to like radio, or participate in through chats. Ten "channels" with progressive shows dedicated to such topics as hip hop, video games, sex, pro wrestling, and theater.

HIGHLIGHTS: 88HIPHOP.COM's Beatmizner Radio hosted by Evil Dee. The "StarFreaky" gossip forum. Pro-wrestling talk show *And Justice for Brawl*.

Joseph Patel



REMOTE PATROL

August marks the Sundance Channel's "Representing Soul" film festival, a spotlight on works by independent African-American and African filmmakers. Whether your interest is comedy, documentary, or *Drylongso*,

a dramatic feature by Cauleen Smith that debuted at this year's Sundance Film Festival, there's plenty to choose from. Check www.sundancechannel.com for a program guide.



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3. **Judging.** All valid entries will be judged on originality and creativity of styles and cuts. All decisions are final. Winner will be chosen on December 17, 1999.

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JOCK STAR

People said running back **RICKY WILLIAMS**—with his tattoos, dreadlocks, and cocky attitude—would never be accepted by middle America. But now that he's got a Heisman Trophy and an NCAA career rushing record under his belt, everybody wants a piece of him. They'll have to move fast, though, because this gridiron superstar is ballin' with the No Limit Soldiers and living the sinful life. *By Shaheem Reid*

For the thousands of fans who flooded Texas's Darrell K. Royal Memorial Stadium during Ricky Williams's career as a University of Texas Longhorn, watching the college pro dodge tackles from the opposition was, as Keith Murray would say, the most beautiful thing in this world. Not only did Williams's 6,279 career rushing yards eclipse Tony Dorsett's 22-year-old mark of 6,082, he also closed out his brilliant collegiate run by propelling his team to a Cotton Bowl victory on New Year's Day. Now entering the big-time ranks of the NFL as a New Orleans Saint, the first-round draft pick stepped off the field for a little locker-room talk about money, Mya, Monica—and his infamous lack of modesty.

With an \$8.8 million signing bonus from the Saints, you've become a millionaire overnight. Is it true what they say about mo' money bringin' mo' problems?

Money definitely causes a lot more problems. Especially when your salary is published in the newspaper. What people don't realize is that the contract is over seven years. They think I have all that money right now.

In February, you announced that you signed

on with Master P's No Limit Sports. Why'd you decide to sign with Brotherman instead of the Other Man?

I did my research; I knew what I was doing. No Limit is like a family. I thought that was better—cause when things go bad, family sticks together.

So do you chill with your new family a lot?

Travels so much it's kind of tough. But I go up to Baton Rouge [, La.] and hang out with the soldiers every chance I get.

I heard those guys play basketball every day. Do you ever get on the court with them?

It's so easy to turn an ankle that I don't play. We just take shots for money. They think I'm no good because I'm a football player, but I got a J so I always win a little loot.

You can get yourself in a lot of trouble in New Orleans. How are you getting acclimated?

Man, I'm telling you! All you can do here is gamble or get really high. It's cool though, because in most [other] towns if you go out and gamble and drink, it's gonna be in the papers. But here, everyone does it, so it's not a big deal.

So what sin do you find yourself committing the most?

Fornication.

While we're on the subject, what's up with sex the night before a game? Does scoring a touchdown have any effect on you scoring a touchdown?

I heard it makes you slower, but the couple of times I did it, I had a great game. Then again, I score a touchdown every game, so it doesn't matter.

On that note, you have a reputation for being kinda arrogant. Are you afraid to cry?

I can't help but do it sometimes because I grew up in a house full of women. I couldn't hide it if I tried.

You obviously spend a lot of time in the gym. If you could have any female artist spot you during a workout, who would it be?

I like Mya, but I don't know how much she could help; she's so little.

You'd better be careful with Mya, or Silkk the Shocker will be trying to run you down with the No Limit tank!

Nah. [Laughs] I just want to kick it with her. I know she and Silkk are real tight. But she's just so cute. Monica's got it going on too, but that's C-Murder's girl.

Singing as your two faces are taken, what are you looking for in a second-round draft pick?

The most important thing is how she looks. It shows how she's taking care of her-

self. Second, she's gotta be smart and independent. Everything else, you can work on.

On the gridiron, Ricky Williams has been known to fumble on occasion. What about when you're running game off the field—does "Little Ricky" ever fumble?

Never. I'm always afraid I'm gonna offend her, so I just take it slow. I let them make the first move. Once they do, I take over. But I never fumble.

Ricky Williams, Ricky Martin, MC Ricky D, or Ricky Ricardo—who's the sickest Rick?

Rick the Ruler! He's old school, man. When I was in fourth grade, oh man! "La-Di-De-Di" was my song.

What attracts women to you the most: the dreads, the money, or your skills on the field?

It's gotta be the money. Martin Lawrence said something like, "When you got money, a girl is not as quick to leave you." They get to the door and be like, "Why you trippin'?" When you're broke and you ask them to leave, they say, "I thought you'd never ask."

I know you've had your locks since high school, but if a coach asked you to get a haircut, would you?

I would never cut my hair. And I'm such a good athlete they wouldn't dare ask me. ☐

word

DOWN IN THE BOONDOCKS

A hip hop comic strip blesses the 'burbs

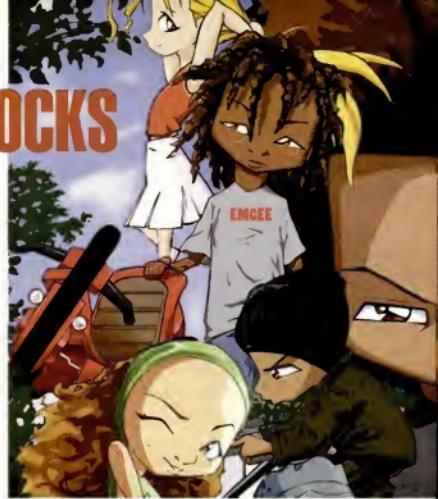


The suburbs might be the last place you'd expect to find high-drama hip hop. But in *The Boondocks*, the nation's first syndicated comic strip with explicit B-boy flavor, 25-year-old cartoonist Aaron McGruder makes the 'burbs his new frontier. When *Boondocks* brothers Huey and Riley Freeman leave Chicago's South Side to resettle in suburbia, Huey tells his cartoon bro, "We are pilgrims in an unholy land." It's a similar story line for McGruder, an upstart illustrator from Maryland, who last spring watched over the wildly successful launch of the strip. "In terms of early sales, [*The Boondocks*] is on par with or better than *Calvin & Hobbes*," says Lee Salem, vice president and editorial director of Universal Press Syndicate, which distributes the strip.

But it wouldn't be hip hop without some controversy. Recently, some readers of the *Chicago Tribune* complained that the strip was "racist" and "gangsta-oriented garbage." Losing newspapers is "an ever-present worry," says McGruder, whose creation has tackled such topics as biracial identity, juvenile delinquency, and black hair since its inception in 1996. "The strip will grow and broaden, and it will focus on things that are perhaps a little less in-your-face," he says. "But it will keep an edge to it."

Jeff Chang

SITE HIT (To see just what has readers riled up, go to www.boondocks.net)



OFF THE BOOKS

Douglas Rushkoff unearths everyday Jedi mind tricks

You can really only break free of coercion once you realize that you yourself are a coercer," says Douglas Rushkoff (right), author of the upcoming, aptly titled *Coercion: Why We Listen to What "They" Say* (Riverhead). The perfect handbook for hip hop's Illuminati Watch, Coercion unmasks a culture of hype and deception through engaging examples. Some gems:

*Many car dealers model their negotiation techniques after CIA interrogations.

*Certain websites can plant spy programs in your computer that report your online and offline activities back to advertisers and hackers.

*The soothing sound of Muzak is known to increase grocery shoppers' purchases by as much as 38 percent. Up-tempo Muzak played in fast-food restaurants makes patrons chew at a faster rate.

And what of coercion in pop music? "Generally, when it's in the hands of the [commercial] folk, music becomes the agent of revolution," says Rushkoff, who has served as a consultant to organizations ranging from Sony Music to the United Nations Commission on World Culture. "That's why music's so dangerous—and so lucrative." Corey Takahashi

SITE HIT (For more musings from Rushkoff, go to www.levity.com/rushkoff/index.html)

READ FOR YOUR LIFE

Survival texts for the year 2G

It's hard to forget that Y2K is approaching, thanks to the ever-vigilant publishing industry. With the possibility looming that books may soon be our *only* form of entertainment, times couldn't be better for bookworms. "We had a Y2K display at the front of our store for a while," says Nancy Hon, a book-information rep at the Stanford Bookstore near California's catastrophe-prone Silicon Valley. "Everyone from programmers to the general public found titles that were interesting to them." VIBE looks at four approaches to Y2K that might be right for you.

Kemp Powers



PARANOIA

Millennium Bug: How to Survive the Coming Chaos (Regnery Publishing)
Michael S. Hyatt

Reading the clever, hypothetical doomsday scenarios, it's easy to see how this book scared its way onto best-seller lists. Great for alarmist fans of movies like *The Matrix* (Warner Bros., 1999).

The Matrix moment: "Gary and Nancy are completely dependent upon their computers. Neither of them realizes, however, that they are dependent upon millions of computers in ways they are unaware of."



PROFIT

How to Profit From the Y2K Recession (St. Martin's Press)
John F. Mauldin

This thinking reader's tome lays out investment tech-

niques and warnings that will help you emerge from the maelstrom P.A.I.D.

Capitalist science: "For some businesses, this will be a time to increase market share by taking advantage of competitor problems, or by buying competitors who are not Y2K ready."



PARTY

The Millennium Guide: Parties, Events & Festivals Around the World (Trailblazer Publications)
Richard Knight

A guide to partying and having fun for those in doomsday denial. The only thing readers have to worry about surviving is their next hangover.

Survival strategy: "Don't drink wine on top of beer, drink lots of water before going to bed, and the next day eat a big breakfast. Follow this with...another drink!"



PEACE

The Hippy Survival Guide to Y2K (Keokee Co. Publishing)
Mike Oehler

Interesting urban, suburban, and rural survival strategies, as well as a chapter that covers tree-hugging philosophy on nuclear waste, the environment, and community.

On procuring food in an emergency: "Pigeons are one likely food source if you can hit them in the head with BBs or catch them in the body with a hand-thrown rock."



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THE MP3 MAIN EVENT

VIBE pits two featherweight MP3 players against each other for the ultimate beatdown

CONTENDERS: Two of the coolest porta-players in the MP3 game have released new machines for listening to downloaded (legal and otherwise) music. The Rio 500 from RioPort Inc., is the newer, second-generation mini MP3 box, but don't sleep on Creative Labs' stylish Nomad. **VS.** Go and pick your winner from www.nomadworld.com or www.rioport.com.



PLAYERS	NOMAD	RIO 500
MEMORY	64 MB, soon to be upgradable to 96 MB	64 MB, upgradable to 96 MB
PLAYBACK TIME	Up to 2 hours of near-CD-quality music playback; 4 hours of spoken-word playback	2 hours of near-CD-quality music playback; 32 hours of spoken-word playback
SUPPORTED AUDIO FORMAT	MP3, ADPCM	MP3, Audible, MPEG 2.5, MS Audio (available with accompanying software)
FM RADIO INCLUDED?	Yes, but no recording off the radio	No
CONNECTION TO COMPUTER	PC parallel port docking station	Mac/PC USB port
PRICE	\$249.99	\$269

THE WINNER. . . . Both units come with software for ripping music from your CDs and converting it into MP3 files for downloading. But the new Rio 500 also adds Mac compatibility and uses the USB port found on Pentium II/III, Apple iMacs, and other G3-based computers, thus making connection to your computer an almost mindless affair. And while both units support MP3 files, the Rio 500 also handles other digital music formats to keep you knee-deep in digital audio for a long time to come. The decision: Rio 500, for our money. *Mark Brooks*



HIGH-TECH FUN for more than 2 G's Full Metal Puppies?

Sony's new cybermutt named Aibo doesn't attack on command, but at least he won't ruin your carpet. Six years in the making, the \$2,500 pseudo-canine is the first of Sony's "entertainment robots." Aibo's infrared sensors allow him to navigate his way around your living room, and with his musical remote control, this pooch can respond to commands like "Sit," "Stand," or "Lie down." With his artificial intelligence software, Aibo can also sense and adapt to your fear, joy, and even anger. Good of 'flesh-and-bone dogs aren't obsolete yet, but Rover had better start learning some new tricks. **VS.** The sold-out U.S. supply of Aibo was available only at www.world.sony.com/robot.

LOW-TECH FUN for less than 2 bucks. A Better Bubbly?

If your idea of fun is crushing an aluminum can against your forehead and belching out the alphabet, Rudy Begonia's Belcher will make you the life of the next party. Billed as an "interactive beverage," the new soda from Excuse Me Inc. is extra carbonated to give just the gas you need to get over that dreaded "L-M-N-O-P" hump. Surprisingly, the super-bubbles don't detract from the taste of the drink's fruity flavors, like Loogie Lime and Gastro Grape. One can of Belcher (877-457-7327) can produce the burp of an entire Budweiser six-pack, without that inevitable Big Pun belly. *Jacob Ogle*



Pocket Playboys

NeoGeo Pocket Color, \$69.95

After 10 years, Nintendo's Game Boy is finally facing some real competition. Although roughly the same size as the Game Boy, SNK's NeoGeo Pocket Color has a slightly larger, sharper, more colorful screen, and it doubles Game Boy's 20 hours of play time with the same two AA batteries.

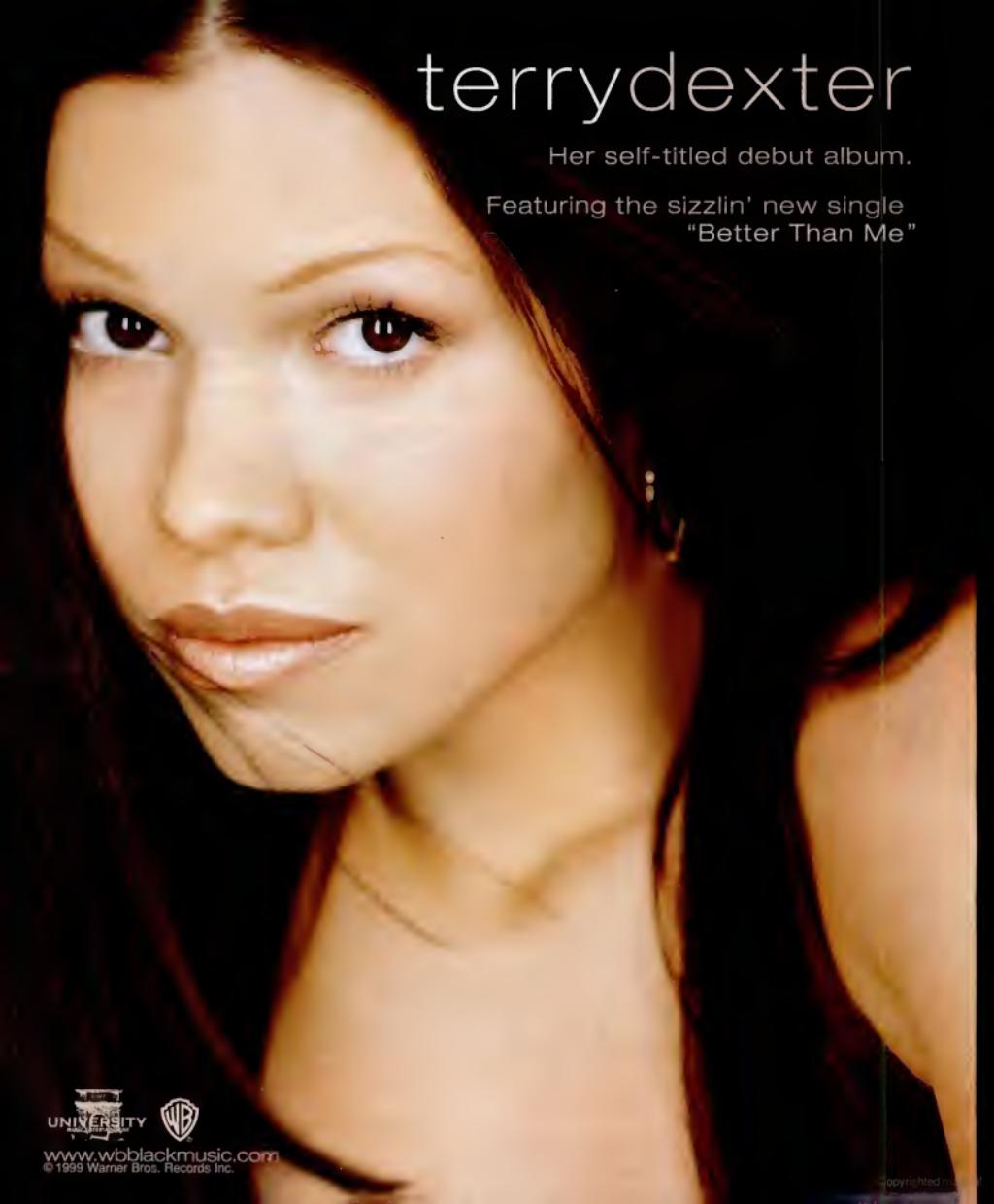
Of course, SNK can't compete with the sheer number of Game Boy titles (more than 400), but it does have games like *Bass a More* and *Samurai Shodown 2*, for example, available in the U.S. The secret weapon? SNK and Sega will be tag-teaming Nintendo when a link cable that will allow NGPC to share info with Sega's Dreamcast is released.

Game Tight

Perfect Dark, Rare Ltd., approximately \$60

Perfect Dark from Rare Ltd. is the sorta sequel to 1997's N64 James Bond smash hit, *GoldenEye 007*—only our new heroine, Joanna Dark, looks better in a skirt. Set in the year 2033, Joanna must save mankind from evil megacorp dataDyne and its equally vile alien

allies, the Skedar. *Perfect Dark* has all the stuff action gamers live for: guns galore, explosions aplenty, and lots of baddies to light up like a Christmas tree. But it's not as easy as it sounds—in *Perfect Dark*, a female superspy's work is never done.



terrydexter

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"This Time"

featuring "Come Around"
produced by Keith Sweat
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Executive Producers: Chantay Savage and Kevin Evans • A&R Director: Kevin Evans • Management: Jeff Carter
CHANTAY SAVAGE "I WILL SURVIVE," THE DEBUT GOLD SINGLE

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"Thank You"

featuring "Never Let You Go Away" and
"Waist Down" produced by The Characters
and "Say That You Will" produced
by Keith Sweat for Raize Productions

Executive Producer: Jerome "Rome" Woods • Management: Mark Lausch for Untouchable Management
ROME "ROME," THE DEBUT PLATINUM ALBUM



REVOLUTIONS

REVOLUTIONS
BY JEFFREY STONE



Sharp-dressed Beatnuts:
Ju Ju (left), Psycho Les

THE BEATNUTS 'A MUSICAL MASSACRE' RELATIVITY

BY ELLIOTT WILSON

Hola, gente. In case you haven't heard, we are now living smack-dab in the middle of a Latin renaissance. All over the entertainment world, Amerikkka's fastest-growing minority group are finally getting their due.

But while boricua boogie man Ricky Martin, Hollywood swinger Salma Hayek, and "Papi-I-wanna-sing" fly girl Jennifer Lopez continue to cop all the headlines, where do a Colombian kid named Psycho Les and his Dominican partner, Ju Ju, fit in? Collectively known as the Beatnuts (and collectively self-proclaimed "the world's famous"), the coproducing, co-rapping duo have, for six years, remained New York hip hop's best-kept secret.

In 1993, these Native Tongue disciples—discovered by the Jungle Brothers' Afrika Bambaataa and named for their ability to find dusty grooves to sample—dropped their debut, *Intoxicated Demons* (*Relativity*), a 25-minute EP of freaky tales ("Story"), hardcore boasts ("Reign of the Tec"), and social commentary ("Psycho Dwart"), respite with the admirable battle cry "I wanna fuck, drink beer, and smoke some shit!"

Even more compelling was the Corona, Queens crew's 1994 long-player, *Street Level* (*Relativity*), a near-perfect mesh of backbreaking

beats and raunchy rhymes. Songs like the Grand Puba-blessed "Are You Ready," the ass-kicking "Hellraiser," and the hypnotic "Get Funky" stand tall through the test of time. Still, for all the Beatnuts' efforts to inject a little creativity into this thing called hip hop, there were no hits.

Three years later, after original member Fashion gained his religion, changed his name to Al Taqib, and left the band, the 'Nuts got *Stone Crazy* (*Relativity*) and busted onto the pop chart for the first time with the album's second single, "Off the Books." (You know the beat, so often played behind radio DJs giving time checks and weather reports, or MTV VJs reading from cue cards: "Boomp. Do-do-doo-doo. Boomp boomp. Do-do-doo-doo.") Fueled by a killer flute loop and a cameo by then newcomer Big Pun, this club-tested banger gave the 'Nuts a taste of what a hit record is all about. And they're thirsty for more.

Which brings us to LP *número tres*. (Last year's lackluster collection of rudimentary remixes, *The Spot EP* (*Relativity*), needn't even be mentioned.) *A Musical Massacre* is a departure of sorts from the diabolical duo's modus operandi. A multitude of special guest stars and ladies singing choruses run rampant throughout, and it's apparent from jump that Psycho Les and Ju Ju have money on their minds. (Check the hard-sell hooks of the jiggably fly "Beatnuts Forever" and the Greg Nice-guided "Turn It Out" for further evidence.)

But let's not cry sellout just yet. Though audibly more in-it-to-win-it than ever, our beloved Beatnuts are still creating unconventional music composed of eclectic sounds. "Siam Pit," featuring the Terror Squad's Cuban Link and a surprise closing cameo by Common, crushes the competition with crunchy drum kicks

A MULTITUDE OF SPECIAL GUEST STARS AND LADIES SINGING CHORUSES RUN RAMPANT THROUGHOUT, AND IT'S APPARENT FROM JUMP THAT PSYCHO LES AND JU JU HAVE MONEY ON THEIR MINDS.

and an unrelenting piano-sampled bass line. It's an exercise in pure mike control, and the beat diggers once again prove that they got the skills to pay the bills.

Amazingly, these two fellas—who began rhyming because they grew tired of incompetent MCs soiling their tracks—now kick some of the more memorable lines in the rap game. Their signature outlandish boasts are as evident as ever on the underwater funk of "I Love It," on which Les and Ju compete over who can kick the silliest line. In the end, Big Psych wins: "I stay high like a stewardess / Fuckin' with this is ludicrous / I just boned your bitch / Now she's making me tuna fish."

Hungry for more? Snack on the card-pulling "You're a Clown," where Les's 6-year-old daughter, Tyler, and the incomparable Biz Markie ride goofy-footed over a swelling wave of circus sounds. For something equally delicious but more familiar, chew on "Watch Out Now," another infectious, flute-inflected chumple that picks up right where "Off the Books" left off.

It's not all good eating, though. *A Musical Massacre* has a disturbing tendency to drift off course, to wander into areas where these bad boys just don't belong. "Look Around" finds the Beatnuts "on some Malcolm X shit," collaborating with righteous upstarts Deed Prez. While the lyrics are insightful, it's hard to get used to the perverted funkesters trying to be uplifting. More fulfilling filler comes in the form of songs like the sorry sequel "Story 2000" and the mawkish "Monster for Music."

Back on solid ground, the 'Nuts shine when they get in touch with their Latin roots. "Se Acabo" is their first strictly Spanish smoker, with a scene-stealing appearance by Proyecto Uno's Magic Juan. And "Puffin' on a Cloud" finds the Junkyard Ju taking a stab at a certain R&B group's liberal use of Spanglish vocals—"Dru Hill don't know what I got / They better stop / It's the Dominican papí / Yo lo mata fícil [I will kill him easily!]. Nigga disrespect, gonna make me catch a body."

Unfortunately, when all's said and done, *A Musical Massacre* fails to slaughter the competition. Unlike the Beatnuts' past material, 1999's offbeat adventures stand strong individually but never come together to form a cohesive package. With a nation of gringos watching, deez 'Nuts are unable to knock it out the park like Sammy Sosa. What a shame. *Hasta mañana*.



Photo: Matt Winkler

ME'SHELL NDEGEOCELLO 'BITTER' MAVICK

Sobering reality check: Singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist/goddess McShell Ndegeocello is better known as a baldheaded, bass-slinging, singing black girl. Folks recognize her more for her guest spot in the house-rockin' John Mellencamp hit video "Wild Night" and her "multisexuality" than for her two righteous collections of cosmic soul serenades, *Plantation Lullabies* (Maverick, 1993) and *Peace Beyond Passion* (Maverick, 1996).

Ironically—even in a so-called brave new pop world that gives L-Boogie five Grammys and certifies hip hop as the new rock—Ndegeocello's prescient reinvention of the blue-black sounds and essence of Jimi Hendrix, funk, Memphis/Philly R&B, D.C. go-go, Bob Marley, Herbie Hancock, Bill Withers, and Curtis Mayfield languishes in relative obscurity. It's particularly sad when you realize that back in the day, her fair-octo cipher would have ranked her in the company of Stevie Wonder and the Artist Formerly Known as Prince (for her 1996 "Ecclesiastes: Free My Heart" alone).

After three years of living the L.A. pop-star life (love hangovers, aloneness, pain/joy head swings, ennui), Baby Girl drops *Bitter*. An impressionistic, rhythmic musicalization of that extended lost weekend, this album is the rare star confessional able to transcend tired genius = pain clichés with feverishly vivid private-life dramas that flash back to spaces you've been (she who feels it, knows it).

None are those trademark wild, funky, jazzy, soulful "message" jammies and boho-ghetto love ballads (as well as the frustrating distance between Ndegeocello's lyrical/instrumental reach and vocalizing grasp). *Bitter* is a shadowy heartbreak hotel filled with Hendrix sky-church guitars, mournful violins and cellos, melancholy pianos, wailing synths, and angelic choirs (all praises especially due to producer Craig Street).

Within *Bitter*'s 12-story cracked house, tortured lovers ("Fool of Me"), pussy-whipped men ("Sincerity"), amped freaks ("Faithful"), starry-eyed romantics ("Satisfy," "Grace"), and platonic friends ("Wasted Time") slow-burn in love's hellfire. All of this, even as Ndegeocello's honey-Dijon contralto whispers—smooches slurs—rasps—spits—preaches with their hubris ("Soiled by my lust / I feel no shame"; "Wasted time on someone who won't love you as much as I"), has nobility, meaning, and purpose. We're talking life-affirming, changing epiphanies, with a little redemption on the side.

In today's settle-for-less black pop world, one wonders if an album as original, provocative, and fuckin' brilliant as McShell Ndegeocello's has any chance of being heard at all. No matter, *Bitter* is Album of the Year.

Tom Terrell

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SOUNDING OFF

A LOOK AT THE YEAR'S BEST AND WORST MOVIE SOUNDTRACKS, AND A LOOK AHEAD.

BY CRAIG SEYMOUR

It's been said that popular music provides the soundtrack for our lives. And increasingly it seems that soundtracks are the most popular music in our lives. On any given week, numerous soundtracks sit at or near the top of *Billboard*'s album charts while tracks from those albums simultaneously scale the singles charts. But why is it some soundtracks have us open like a jumbo bag of Twizzlers, while others let us down like a direct-to-video flick starring our favorite MC?

There's nothing new about smash soundtracks. But in the past, a soundtrack's success was directly related to the success of the corresponding film. Not so in the '90s. Death Row's '94 *Above the Rim* featured blazing cuts like Warren G and Nate Dogg's "Regulate" and Lady of Rage's "Afro Puffs." It went on to sell 2 million copies, long after the floppily film was bounced from theaters.

Because of this, record labels now bid on movie soundtracks like your grandma on a B.B. King record at the swap meet. Sometimes it doesn't even matter if the songs are in the movie, hence the disclaimer "Music from and inspired by the motion picture." What really inspires some artists is probably not the film but the big-ass hunk of cheese they get for contributing a song. And what inspires the record labels is selling the most units while also exposing the increasingly fickle music-buying public to new artists. This is why so many soundtracks lure you with big

names but disappoint you with puny results and too many wack cuts by the labels' latest new and no talents.

Then again, soundtracks gave us some of the most popular singles of the '90s: Aaliyah's 1998 "Are You That Somebody?" (*Polygram's Dr. Dolittle*),



Björk

Coolio's 1995 "Gangsta's Paradise" (*MCA's Dangerous Mind*), and the original version of En Vogue's soaring 1996 "Don't Let Go (Love)" (*Elektra's Set It Off*). Soundtracks also introduced some of our greatest hip hop and R&B

WHY IS IT SOME SOUNDTRACKS HAVE US OPEN LIKE A JUMBO BAG OF TWIZZLERS, WHILE OTHERS LET US DOWN LIKE A DIRECT-TO-VIDEO FLICK STARLING OUR FAVORITE MC?

artists, like Biggie, who debuted with "Party and Bullshit" on 1993's *Who's the Man* (*Uptown/MCA*), and Mary J. Blige, who busted out with "You Remind Me" from 1991's *Strictly Business* (*Uptown/MCA*).

Two of this year's best soundtracks also present some promising new talents. The soundtrack for martial-arts film *Black Mask* (*Tommy Boy*) showcases some of hip hop's deepest and best-connected up-and-coming MCs, especially on *701 Squad*'s posse cut "Black Mask (We're Taking It All),"

featuring Diamonds in Da Ruff, former Eminem sidekick Royce the 5'9, and Hanibal Star of Fabidden (who appeared on Gang Starr's 1998 *Noo Tybe/Virgin album, Moment of Truth*). Likewise, *Wild Wild West*, on Will Smith's Overbrook label (distributed by Interscope), spotlights 20-year-old Brooklyn, N.Y., native and Morgan State University senior Kel Spencer, nippin' "I Wanted," a clever hip hop spin on Bon Jovi's 1986 "Wanted Dead or Alive."

Though *Wild Wild West* works as a hot collection of potential hits by newcomers and established acts like Faith, the most cohesive soundtracks tend to be producer-driven. Perfect examples are Babyface's 1995 *Waiting to Exhale* (*Arista*) and Dallas Austin's sorely overlooked 1996 *Fled* (*Rowdy*). This year, after his huge *Space Jam* anthem,



Maxwell

because of their popularity, soundtracks aren't even limited to films anymore. In fact, one of the year's best is not for a film but for a book. Inspired by *Black Gangster* (*Holloway, 1989*), written in jail by the late Donald Goines, the soundtrack (*Black Hand/Light Year*) of the same name features head-nodding introspective ruffneck musings by hip hop's current elite—Jay-Z, Ja Rule,

and DMX—as well as newcomers like Mysonne and Mac Mall.

But if these picks don't suit you, plenty more soundtracks are coming with the fall movie season about to start and all the Christmas blockbusters on the way. By the time you read this, *The Wood* (*Jive*), featuring the OutKast-



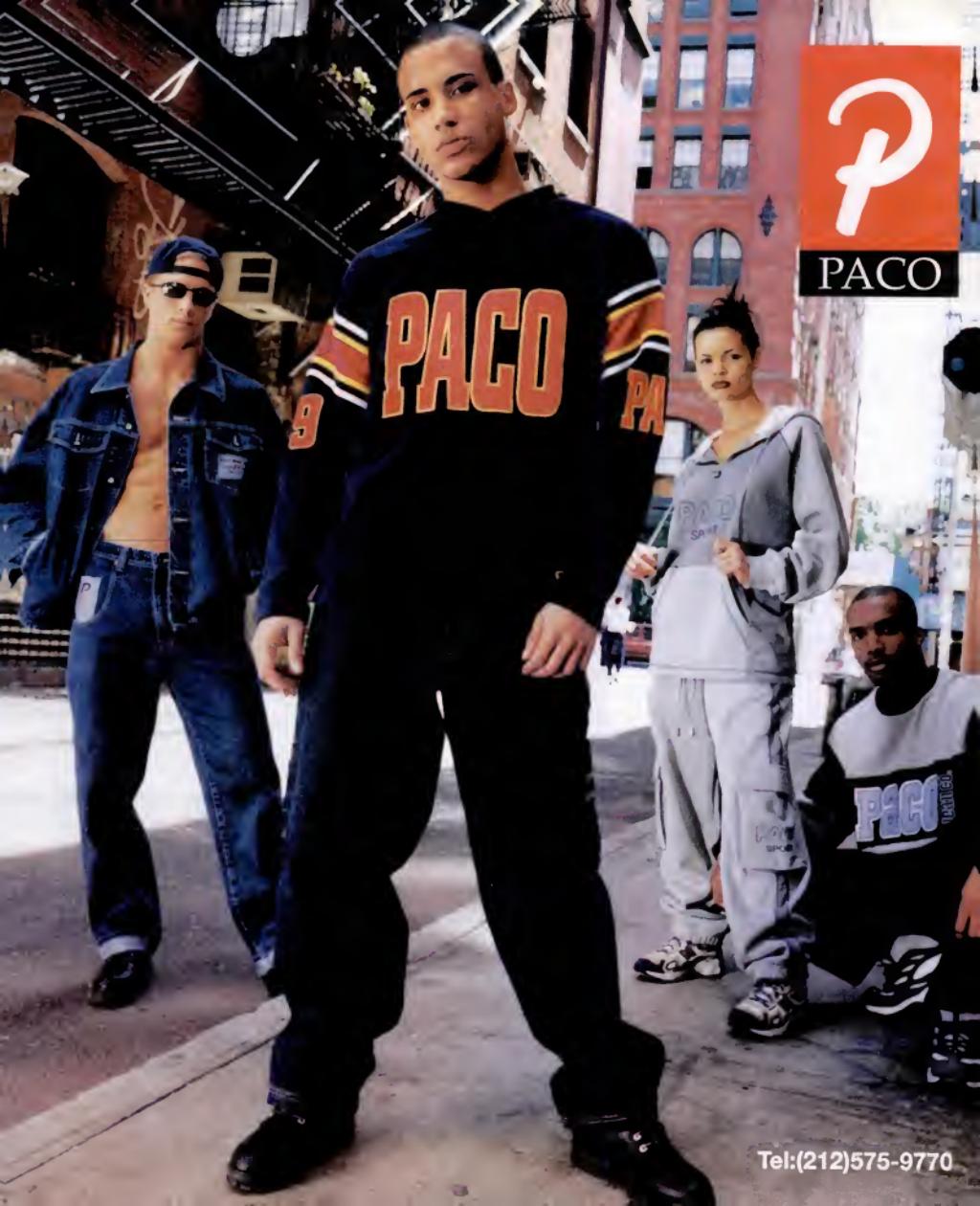
K-Ci and Jojo

"I Believe I Can Fly," and such cinematic-sounding hits as "When a Woman's Fed Up," R. Kelly stepped up to write and produce the majority of the soundtrack to Eddie Murphy's prison comedy, *Life* (*Interscope*). Most of the album is an inspired collection: Maxwell does his sensitive lover-man thing on the chart-topping "Fortunate," K-Ci and Jojo holler about being locked down on the title track, and Kelly Price wails about being trapped in a bad relationship on "It's Gonna Rain."

The worst soundtracks happen when labels try to serve too many audiences at once. Case in point: this year's *The Mod Squad* (*Asylum/Elektra*), which includes artists from Busta Rhymes to rock has-beens Crash Test Dummies to pint-size electronica queen Björk. Even if you're a cool eclectic type who rocks these varied sounds, it's doubtful that you cram them all into a one-hour chunk. Lauryn Hill even missteps on this soundtrack. "Here but I'm Gone (Part II)" is hyped as a collaboration between Hill and soul legend Curtis Mayfield, but it's really just Hill rhyming and unnecessarily crooning over a track from Mayfield's 1996 *New World Order* (*Warner Bros.*).



Mystikal cut "Neck Uv Da Woods" and classics from Whodini and Biz Markie, will have dropped. And *Whiteboys* (*Offline/TVT Soundtrack*), featuring Snoop Dogg, Big Pun, and Busta's Flipmode Squad, will also be jockin' for space in the soundtrack racks. For the near future, the soundtrack tide seems unstoppable. You can hate them now. But they won't stop now.



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GOSPEL GANGSTAZ 'I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW' B-RITE/INTERSCOPE



Evidently Mase isn't the only rapper who's turned his life over to God. On their heartfelt debut, *I Can See Clearly Now*, L.A.'s Gospel Gangstaz spearhead the movement to bring the Lord to the hip hop masses. Rappers/singers Mr. Solo, Chille Baby, and Tik Tokk profess genuine, harmonic testimony of being saved. Still, it's hard not to label the album as slightly corny, a little too preachy, and plain old soft.

Soliciting spirituality to thugs can't be an easy task, but these gang-bangers—cum—Christian rappers try. The Cali bounce of "Live It Up," a tune about partying with God, sounds perfect for the Sunday school crowd, but the song's staunch religious nature will certainly ruin the buzz and good time of the Saturday-night club crowd/sinner. However, the group's extremely energetic remake of René and Angela's 1983 funk-skate-bounce classic "I'll Be Good," produced by the Trackmasters, has the potential to become a hit like Kirk Franklin's 1997 "Stomp."

Like Franklin's music, GG's offers a perfect reprieve from the graphic sex, violence, and materialism found in contemporary urban music. But rugged hip hop heads looking for spirituality will probably do better listening to songs like Genius's 1995 "B.I.B.L.E." or Goodie Mob's 1998 "Still Standing." *I Can See Clearly Now*, although inspirational, doesn't exactly speak to the streets.

Miguel Burke

TERRY DEXTER 'TERRY DEXTER' UNIVERSITY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

Newcomer Terry Dexter doesn't disappoint with her amorous self-titled debut. With emphasis on the ills of love's bumpy path, the Detroit native uses her airy soprano to tell a love story, each song serving as a delicious morsel of the tale. She begins with the initial wooing, revels in the blissful dating period, and ultimately tackles the painstaking breakup.

On the up-tempo, synth-heavy "Better Than Me," Dexter starts off as a friend who wants to graduate to lover status. Despite constant warnings from female cohorts and her inner voice, she opts to give things a whirl on the sexy "I Try." But it's the tumultuous tunes that kick this ballad-potent project into high gear. Over an abyssal drum program and whipping snares, Dexter delivers a touching ultimatum on "You'll Never Miss Me." Now deep into the relationship, she professes, "I make sure the apartment's never dirty / But

when you get home you don't even kiss me / ... maybe I'll just say goodbye to you."

The album stalls when Dexter cranks the pace to dance-floor levels. The gleeful "Are You Feeling Me?" and "I'm the One" use title, pop-inspired tracks that simply don't live up to her strong vocals. But despite the occasional potholes, Dexter's trek down love's rocky road proves to be a trip worth taking.

Jermaine Hall

SKUNK ANANSIE 'POST ORGASMIC CHILL'

VIRGIN

The opening track of Skunk Anansie's *Post Orgasmic Chill* begins with the sound of soothing Eastern strings. But the feeling of tranquility that heralds "Charlie Big Potato" doesn't last long. In less than a minute, warped breakbeats give way to a meaty riff that sounds like it was plucked wholesale from an old Metallica album. The first words that come through the noise are, "I awake from blood-thick dreams, washing blame from my knees."

Fronted by the sensual yet bard-as-nails Skin (a.k.a. Deborah Dyer), Skunk Anansie are like no other band. A product of London's bustling music scene, their music encompasses everything from the latest club trends to the gritty guitar feedback of Her Majesty's undying punk subjects.

Post Orgasmic Chill is Skunk Anansie's third album. It is also the group's best, exploring both their fearless and vulnerable sides with equal determination on

multifaceted tracks like "On My Hotel TV" and "The Skank Heads." Former Nirvana producer Andy Wallace makes the whole thing sound easy to swallow, while Skin makes it hard to forget.

On the album's moody centerpiece, "Good Things Don't Always Come to You," she knowingly sings, "Some things don't go as you want them to / Good things they don't always come to you."

Aidan Vaziri

SHYHEIM 'MANCHILD'

WU-TANG/PRIORITY

Shyheim, the now grown Wu-Tang shorty who recently deleted the "Rugged Child" from his name, represented for the children way before Ol' Dirty Bastard. While his debut and sophomore albums, 1994's *A.K.A.* and *The Rugged Child* (Virgin) and 1996's *The Lost Generation* (Noo Trybe/Virgin), were basically overlooked for being too bubblegum, his deeply introspective third effort, *Manchild*, is just the opposite.

The cuts can get seriously dark and depressing. That's all the more reason why the jolly, perky melody of "Unconditional Love" seems misplaced on a song where Shyheim emotionally rhymes about unwavering love for a drug-addicted mother. He weaves another heart-clutching tale of lost innocence on the beautifully haunting, mandolin-driven title track, produced by Bad Boy Hitman Nashiem Myrick. For a special treat, Shyheim's Wu-brother Method Man stops in to heat up the smoky ode to unity and back watching on "Am I Your Brother's Keeper?"

Even though Shyheim proves to be lyrically sharp and a dope freestyler ("I Declare War"), the boisterous, grating production on songs like "Furious Anger" and "Verses From the Arsenal" distract listeners and takes away from Shyheim's rhyming skills. Still, *Manchild* truthfully speaks volumes about the struggles faced by ghetto youths and is definitely worth checking out.

Miguel Burke



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Certain artists have an uncanny way of delivering magical, spine-tingling records year in and year out without generating much hype. DJs know their names and live shows spread the word, until by slow degrees they emerge as stealthy veterans, pleasing their die-hard fans with maximum craftsmanship and minimum nonsense.

"You've gotta make an effort in order to survive," croons Singing Melody on "Make an Effort," from his latest and finest album, *Sweeter* (VP). "You've got to make an effort for God to save your life."

And he did, because he wasn't supposed to survive. Back in 1990—

when his warm and easy version of "Groovy Kind of Love" was tearing up the place—Melody had just brought a motorcycle back to Jamaica after collecting some big yen at Japansplash. A car up ahead signaled right but turned left, and next thing Melody knew he was in the hospital with two broken legs and fractures of the shoulder and jawbone.

"I was very bad," he recalls. "I had to be off the scene because I was on my back in the hospital for almost a year." But since Melody's youthful days hanging out at Volcano High-Power dances, he has come to know about survival of the fittest: If you don't keep on top you a go drop. "I was supposed to be on a big stage show; I think it was Borderclash '91," he says. "I don't know how I did it, but I snuck out of the hospital and did the show. People said it was a touching performance," he says, then, with pride, adds: "Only Ninjaman could keep up to the pace that I set that night."

It's that sort of intensity and dedication that have maintained Singing Melody's high standard through two decades of day-to-day showbiz hustling. Through every setback, the man's vibes only seem to get stronger. He can take the cheesiest pop tune, say Take That's "I Want You Back," bounce it on a reggae beat, and break your heart. In his sublime version of "Let It Flow," **Melody invests the tune with melodramatic urgency that takes it somewhere Toni Braxton's never been—to a larger-than-life theater of spirit and flesh, comedy and tragedy, heaven and hell—to the dancehall, to be exact.**

"Because I'm an artist that grew up in the dancehall scene, I always have to pay respect to the sound systems," says Melody. "It's like a drug that take control of your body. So I'm not gonna take no more break. Right now I'm just focusing on keeping my people uplifted and happy." Just the other day, at the New York Music Festival (see photo above), he stood at the front of a stadium full of fans. As he raised the microphone to his lips, a thousand voices cheered with delight, air horns blew, and once again, Singing Melody had what he always wanted. As he said, "If a money or respect, I'll take the respect. Because you can't take that away."



Singing Melody

HEAVY ROTATION:

AUGUSTUS PABLO, *Valley of Jahosphat* (Ras)
LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY & THE UPSETTERS, *Upsetters Show* (Heartbeat)
DEADLY HEADLEY & SAXSEMINA, *Kingston Sessions* (Saxsemilia)
NASIO FONTAINE, *Revolution* (Aphelion)
KING TUBBY & FRIENDS, *Dub Like Dis* (Blood and Fire)

EPMD 'OUT OF BUSINESS' DEF JAM

With five gold albums to their credit, EPMD now release *Out of Business*, a jam-packed double disc featuring both old hits and new joints. With classics like 1988's "You Gots to Chill" and '92's "Headbanger," the album deserves praise and props on the sheer strength of the duo's favorites.

Not to be underestimated, the new songs are more than the usual filler found on greatest-hits collections. From the racing "Intro" (featuring a subtle sample from Capitol's 1971 soundtrack for the movie *Roddy*) to the wickedly infectious (yet slightly repetitive) "Right Now," the album's production is smooth, tight, and nearly flawless. What makes this release a true success is EPMD's ability to help well-respected lyrical stars shine even more brightly. The aptly titled "Symphony" is a perfect backdrop for MOP's aggressive, no-nonsense delivery. And although Busta Rhymes is hardly necessary as a hype man on the uninspiring "Rap Is Still Outta Control," 8 Off Agallah and 215 expertly ride a Wu-Tang-style beat on "U Got Shot." One of the highlights, "Symphony 2000," is a tag-team explosion, featuring Redman (of course), Method Man, and newly signed Def Jam artist Lady Luck. As long as there are rare tracks to be sampled and grimy, street-worthy lyrics to hook up with, EPMD will always be open for business.

Aliya S. King



ELsie MUÑIZ 'ELsie MUÑIZ'

UNIVERSITY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT/INTERSCOPE



also allowed producers like Timbaland to further experiment with the Spanish beats that have slowly started seeping into a lot of urban music.

On the hyped "As We Danced," Elsie's vocals bounce over Timbaland and Bill Pettway's electric cowbells and maracas. The singer is most self-assured and full of irresistible attitude on the album's deepest track, "Take Control," a dance groove featuring rhymes by new Latino rap crew 1 Life 2 Live. Rookie production collective Swing Central Station come off with "What If," a lament laced with flamenco guitars and breakbeats, and "La Gata Negra (The Black Cat)," which weaves a spell within its bewitching chorus. Swing Central best establish a balance between the young starlet's two worlds.

Elsie's timing couldn't be better now that America's interest in Latin styles (thanks to artists like Ricky Martin and Jennifer Lopez), hip hop, and R&B have soared higher than ever. *Elsie Muñiz* gives the world yet another reason to forget about rock music and just dance.

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TRICKY 'JUXTAPOSE' ISLAND

Full of shorter tunes and simpler hooks, and recorded with the help of platinum-fingered fellow producer DJ Muggs (Cypress Hill) and Dame Grease (DMX), Tricky's new album, *Juxtapose*, is his poppiest effort yet. In fact, one could almost say *Juxtapose* is more commercial than any of the Bristol, England-born avant-gardist's four previous platters. Almost.

"For Real," the first and best track, gets in your brain and stays there. As much post-punk as it is hip hop, the song rocks warmly with a soft-strum guitar and a meandering bass line. Tricky continues to have issues with the record industry (remember the 1998 B side, "Divine Comedy," on which Tricky repeated the phrase "Fuck Polygram" again and again?), but instead of complaining, the lyrics here offer sober equations on how to survive. Or not.

Throughout the album, though, a lighter, less esoteric Tricky proves why his music has really been hip hop all along. Closer to the sounds associated with American rap and American pop (one can almost hear chords that the Mamas & the Papas might've used), *Juxtapose* still manages to confound expectations. Although on some cuts Tricky seems to be coasting on the mystique of his gruff, laryngeal voice, he continues to take chances. Instead of delivering the richly dark head music he's known for, he throws us a change-up: fresh beats, freestyle breaks, and a playful reluctance to be so damn heavy all the time. *George Pitts*

DESTINY'S CHILD 'THE WRITING'S ON THE WALL'

COLUMBIA

Teenage quartet Destiny's Child might have to find a new name after the release of their winning sophomore disc. Between the girls' revealing, sexy attire and the album's constant references to lyin', cheatin', and creepin', *The Writing's on the Wall* ain't child's play.

The Houston-based honeys—Beyoncé, Kelly, La Tavia, and LeToya—are best known for their 1998 multiplatinum smash "No, No, No" from their self-titled debut (Columbia). Now they return with a collection of funky, beat-savvy tunes guaranteed to offend certain fellas as the battle of the sexes rages on. On the catchy "Bills, Bills, Bills," Destiny's Child drive the knife left by TLC even deeper into the collective male psyche with lyrics like "You're trillin' / Good-for-nothin' type of brotha / Silly me / Why haven't I found another?" Songs like the biting "Bug-A-Boo" and the defiant sistahs' anthem "Hey Ladies" add even more fuel to the fire.

But alas, all is fair in love and war. "Stay," a beautiful, soothing ode to lost love, proves that these ladies aren't entirely heartless. "If You Leave," a jazzy number featuring R&B group Next, and "Confessions," featuring supra-producer Missy Elliott, make amends for the bitter squabbling found elsewhere on the album.

Destiny's Child are obviously determined to meddle in grown folks' business, so why should we stand in their way? *Tomioka Anderson*

Girls II Women





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VARIOUS ARTISTS 'QUANNUM SPECTRUM'
QUANNUM PROJECTS



Find not, hip hop Cassandras: The underground muse is alive and well and living in Northern California. Led by DJ Shadow, jounalist Jeff Chang, and a small cadre of Frisco-chillin', beat bomb-throwing revolutionaries such as Latyrx and Blackalicious, the label Quannum Projects pounces hard on the brain while moving butter, bringing hip hop back to the days when limber-tongued poets and philosophers held forth over dense dance-music constructs. There are no play-hating polemics or gangsta posturing to be found on this exemplary compilation of Quannum artists—just wildly inventive head-hop. Unlike labels such as No Limit and Cash Money, Quannum doesn't aspire to be a musical monolith. Instead, Quannum's artists find unity in diversity.

On tracks like "One of a Kind" and "Storm Warning," Quannum MCs The Gift of Gab and Lyrics Born kick up verbal storms over earth-quaking beats. But there are also vocalist Joyo Velarde's neoclassical soul shot "People Like Me," and "Hott People," Lyrics Born's homage to late-'70s platform-heeled funk. SoCal fellow Traveler Divine Styler also contributes one of his loopy metaphysical rants alongside DJ Shadow's abstract vinyl bricolage on "Divine Intervention." At a time when hip hop is being held hostage by too many unimaginative hacks, the Quannum collective continues to believe in the power of the mind to turn the beat around.

Marc Weingarten

NATALIE COLE 'SNOWFALL ON THE SAHARA' ELEKTRA

Why doesn't Natalie Cole just face it? She's truly a daddy's girl. Time and again she's proved that what she does best is sing what her late father, Nat "King" Cole, sang—romantic standards that were popular from the 1930s through the '50s. Her last album, 1996's *Stardust* (Elektra), is a brilliantly performed package of these timeless tunes. Clearly, she has a deep passion for this material, but pop radio won't touch the oldies, which are geared to the over-45 crowd. So, to avoid being assigned a plot in the commercial graveyard, Cole came up with *Snowfall on the Sahara*, a contemporary, ballad-heavy pop and R&B collection, partly produced by two big-time producers, Phil Ramone and David Foster.

Cole puts a gentle R&B spin on a wide range of pop material, from Leon Russell's overrated "A Song for You" to soul standards like "Reverend Lee" and "Stay With Me" to obscure tunes by Bob Dylan and Judy Collins. Cole is trying to prove that she still has mainstream commercial appeal, but all she shows is that when she strays from her strength, she can make a real snoozer of an album. With a lone exception, the bouncy jazz tune "Everyday I Have the Blues," Cole squanders that terrific voice on the wrong material.

Dennis Hunt



REVOLUTIONS
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FLY TRACKS OR WACK WAX? ASK OUR RESIDENT CRITICS, A & B.

"You Know," HEAVY D, FEATURING CEE-LO / Heavy (Universal)



A: Heavy D and Cee-Lo? That's a weird combination. But Cee-Lo's rhymed with just about everybody. I can't really make out the chorus. **B:** It's a very Goodie MOB chorus with all that singin'. Wait, is that Heavy D singin'? **A:** Yeah. **B:** Cee-Lo can do that, but Heavy can't. **A:** It's like Heavy D is tryin' to sound like everybody else instead of stickin' to his own formula. **B:** Maybe he just wanted to do something different and creative.... **A:** Who wants

creative? I just want diddy-diddly-diddly-dee. Now, if he would've said that over this pick, I'd be like, *Ahh...* **B:** No, I'd have to shoot him in the middle of the song.

"Sunshine," COKO, Hot Coko (RCA)

A: It does feel like sunshine. And like Rodney Jerkins. You know I love Coko's voice, but there's just something about a 26-year-old woman named Coko. **B:** [Laughs] This is cute. Rodney Jerkins helped her out, though. **A:** I can see little girls in sundresses playin' this, skippin' and playing jacks in the projects. **B:** Why they gotta be in the projects? Why not the suburbs? **A:** They can be in the suburbs! I just see them buyin' quarter-waters and sunflower seeds and singin' "Sunshine." That's all. **B:** Anyway, Coko's voice sounds real good. But I miss SWV. **A:** This sounds like an SWV song. You just won't see the other two girls in the video. **B:** [Laughs] She sounds like that girl in a church choir who sends chills down your body. **A:** She could be singing anything, like, [attempting to sing] "I gotta cook me some breakfast / Cook me some grisss..." **B:** Please stop!

"The Hey Song," SPEECH / Hoopla (TVT)



His message is nice, though. Even though he sounds silly. **A:** Speech had his 15 minutes. **B:** Maybe he should just go back to being a good producer. **A:** He needs to get back with Dionne Farris. Actually, he should've gotten with Dionne Warwick. She would've told him, "Hey, it ain't gonna work, baby."

celebrate!

After a three year hiatus, Norman Brown returns with his Warner Bros. debut

norman brown

celebration

Well worth the wait. *Celebration* features Norman's trademark brand of humor and vocals with an R&B flavor. Includes "I'm Gonna Make You," "Never Again," "Paradise," and "I'm Gonna Make Me Feel Brand New" with guest vocals by Phyllis.

START HERE

Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. presents Norman's trademark brand of humor and vocals with an R&B flavor. Includes "I'm Gonna Make You," "Never Again," "Paradise," and "I'm Gonna Make Me Feel Brand New" with guest vocals by Phyllis.

Produced by Norman Brown, Paul Brown and OJ Pierce for OJ! Adewin Productions

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KY-MANI 'THE JOURNEY' SHANG/GE STREET/V2

It's an ambivalent legacy that Ky-Mani lives with. The son of Bob Marley and Anita Belavanis, his 1996 U.K.-only debut, *Like Father Like Son* (Creole), was an elegantly voiced but completely predictable set of Wallers covers. Yet as Miami-raised Ky-Mani makes his major-label debut, he has noticeably removed his father's regal name. Still, it comes as little surprise that one of *The Journey's* most compelling tracks is the painfully earnest "Dear Dad." "Dear Dad / I really didn't get to know you," he sings, in the grain of his father's great voice over the bubbling "Crazy Baldheads" riddim. "When I'm down-and-out, lonely, or just feeling blue / all I do, Dad, I think of you."

At its heart, *The Journey* is world pop à la the Fugees—equal parts R&B, acoustic balladry, hip hop edge, and rootsy dancehall. The obligatory club vehicles, "Party's On" and "Hi-Way," are frustratingly hollow. But tracks like "Rude Boy," "Lord Is My Shepherd," and "Warriors" hint at a street-earned spirituality. And in a three-part suite that sets "Country Journey" and "Return of a King" as bookends to "Dear Dad," Ky-Mani directly confronts the loss of his father and friends. In these wrenching, ultimately soaring performances, Ky-Mani succeeds in setting his (as well as our) captive spirits free.

Jeff Chang

GANG STARR

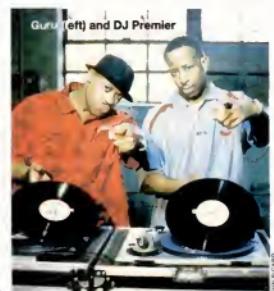
'FULL CLIP: A DECADE OF GANG STARR'

VIRGIN

Rarely in hip hop—or any other medium of expression, for that matter—is consistency and straight-up hard work rewarded. That's why it's so remarkable that Gang Starr continue to reach more and more listeners with every one of their LPs. They chug along slowly, producing a body of work that is unparalleled in its genre. Now, more than 10 years and five albums (1998's *No Trybe*/Virgin release *Moment of Truth* is the only one that reached gold status), Guru and DJ Premier release *Full Clip: A Decade of Gang Starr*, a double CD featuring some of the duo's finest moments.

The strength of *Full Clip*, like all other Gang Starr projects, is its thoroughness. With their 34 choice selections, Gang Starr dispense exact doses of their material. It contains not only standards like "DWYCK," "Step in the Arena," and "Manifest" but also the more obscure soundtrack contribution "Jazz Thing." Perhaps most exciting, though, is the inclusion of "The ? Remainz," "So Wassup?," "Credil Is Due," and other B sides that have never been available on compact disc. With another perfect release under their belt, Guru and Premier take one more huge stride in their march down the path of excellence.

Noah Callahan-Bever



BY CHAIRMAN MAU

CHAIRMAN'S CHOICE

Pittsburgh rap outfit Strict Flow possess two dexterous verbal gymnasts, Masai Turner and Sied Chahrour, who worship words like they own stock in Webster. But it's this steel curtain quartet's production savvy—courtesy of studio rats Chad L. Glick and Eric Dan—that provides "People on Lock" b/w "R-A-D-I-O" (Raw Shack, 718-230-1233) with its real resonance. The A side keeps brain synapses ringing with a punchy, big-band-like horn hook; the flip flops chiming harp chords and an infant's cries over obstinate bass thumps. Strictly infectious.

When Brooklyn's curiously christened Cactus Jack states "Rap is sex / Rap is love / Hard mugs and drugs" on "Act Like What U Say" (Bi-Coastal, 212-591-0419), his gruff cadence makes you a believer. And with appearances from Ed O.G. and Big Dubez, and a slick New Edition—sampled hook in support, you know Jack ain't fakin' shit. When fellow New York mike strangler Paw-Dukes lays out his everyman MO—"Ganja's my addiction / Hip hop is my religion"—on "Amazin'" (Hi-Rise, 212-539-8489), he wins more points for sincerity than originality. But the Knightz of Muzik-produced dirty just plain wins for its plaintive Fender Rhodes keyboard melody, an echoey throwback to days of crate digging past.

Those in the know already know that Dr. Oop's "Deep Impact" (PUTS, 323-734-2911) has enjoyed quite a pleasant recent past—it's tension-filled organ groove has been bangin' on the L.A. underground for months. Nonetheless, this punchline-loving rhyme quack ("Surrounded, you sound boy / You need more Dolby / I roll my weed in a stogie / And slowly outcore Kobe") deserves late-night props. Check the drunkenly crooned Bill Withers—isms on the fun-filled bonus track "Just the Three of Us" (featuring pals Thes One and Double K from People Under the Stairs), and go see the Doctor.

Predictable as it may be at this point, I still recommend seeing Dilated Peoples for hip hop you can depend on. DP's Evidence and Incisive make appearances on two worthwhile offerings currently available at your local rap mart: Encore featuring Evidence, "Filthy" (Certified, HOBOS1200@aol.com), a nasty dose of blundered piano bits and Jera Tha Damaja vocal bites; and Swollen Members featuring Dilated Peoples, "Counter Pans" (Battle Axe, 604-801-1465), a crazy spacey pose hootenanny.

"What is the youth if they ain't rebellin'?" Q-Tip asked on A Tribe Called Quest's 1991 "What?" Houston's K-Otix were obviously taking notes.

"7 MC's" and kept up on last year's "7 MC's Pt. 2"—on their "What?"-style "Questions" (K-Otix, 713-217-6497). Set to sparse keyboard riffs, the inquisition is unrelenting: "Why do rap superstars hire ghostwriters? / How come everybody seems to sound the same? / Why can't these rappers try to stick with one name? / Player haters? / Or fearless investigative reporters? Why not buy this record and decide for yourself?

HEAVY ROTATION:

"Love Allah" featuring Kronk b/w "Evergreen" (S.O.L. Music Works, 322-857-1565)
Soundpieces: *Da Antidote!*
(Stones Throw/Nu Grov Alliance, 415-441-5051)
"Outlaw (Wildcat Pt. 2)" (Fat Beats, 212-965-1862)
"Keep It Movin'"
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INOJ 'READY FOR THE WORLD' SO SO DEE

Ready for the World, the debut LP from 23-year-old Inoj (pronounced eye-no-jay), is a telling example of what can happen when repetitive, thumping bass beats fuse with R&B and pop rhythms. On her previously released hit singles—adapted remakes of *Ready for the World's* 1986 hit “Love You Down”



groove brought to life by acoustic guitar licks and rim-shot drums. Inoj's breathy, cherublike vocals fly on the dance tune "Need to Feel," while "Rather Be Alone" is a warm ballad locked down by a sinewy track.

The possibilities stop there. The repetitiveness of the bass tends to keep songs firmly lodged in first gear instead of propelling them ("Fallin'," "Wait for You," and "Precious Love"). It's Inoj's hauntingly sensual voice that makes this album somewhat gratifying. While she isn't quite ready for the world, she's definitely on the right track—at least vocally.

Andrew Gillings

DRES 'SURE SHOT REDEMPTION'

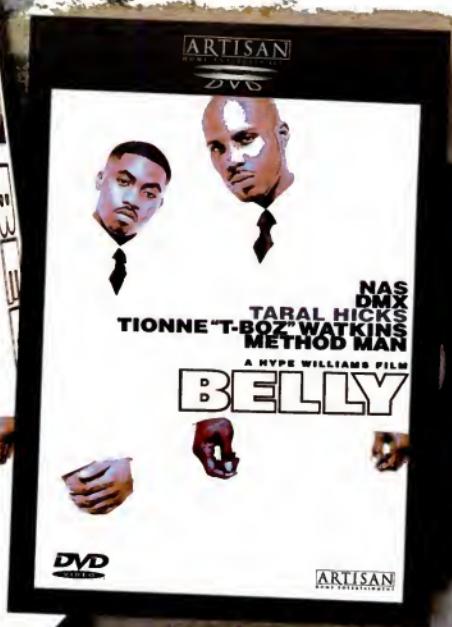
GROUND CONCRETE with **WESMAC**

Go ahead and call it a comeback. Black Sheep may have been put out to pasture for several years, but Dres returns with *Sure Shot Redemption*, a wholly satisfying piece of pure hip hop. Produced by Dres, newcomers Fat Daddy, Molecules, Joe Blunt, and Gene Brown, and featuring appearances by Chi Ali, Horace Brown, and the Legion, Sure Shot sounds fresh even though its beats are reminiscent of those that made Black Sheep's 1991 *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* (Mercury) a hit.

Rich piano and trumpet samples on the relaxed "As I Look Back" allow smooth-flowing Dres to do what he does best. The catchy horn loop on "Straight Paper" and the thick bass line on "Endz" are just a couple more reasons why this album is so very (and maybe surprisingly) worthy. As an MC, Dres sounds exactly the same, which is a good thing. He's a little less convincing on fast-paced, hard-edged tunes like "Never Say," but he shines brightly on cuts like "Start of Somethin' Big," on which he sticks to the laid-back style we know and love him for. Sure Shot not only hits the target, but comes this close to striking a bull's-eye.

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**1. If Ja Rule does
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**as salsa-beat remix of his hit single (which
idea), will it be called "Hola Hola"?**



2. Isn't Dr. Evil a much better MC than Will Smith, as evidenced by the Evil One's version of Smith's sweet but ultra-corny "Just the Two of Us" from the soundtrack for *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*?

3. How fly are those funky Spiderman Nikes? 4. Why is ABC's *The Practice*, like, the *only* show? 5. Here's an idea: Shouldn't Entertainment come out with the ultimate "Un" compilation, featuring TLC's "Unpretty," Toni Braxton's

"Unbreak My Heart," Alanis Morissette's "Uninvited," Notorious B.I.G.'s "Unbelievable," The Replacements'

King of Pop?



"Unsatisfied," Queen and David Bowie's "Under Pressure," and Red Hot Chili Peppers' "Under the Bridge"? **6. After listening to ancient Liz Smith and Army Archerd regurgitate the same old Elizabeth Taylor and Michael Jackson bits, aren't we glad to see some of our own VIBE hip hop flavor bum-rushing the E! *Gossip Show*?** **7. Could a love match be any more perfect than the beautiful Halle Berry and the wicked fine, equally beautiful Eric Benét?** **8. With Michael Jackson set to release a new album sometime in November (right around -the time we're also expecting new albums from Will Smith, Babyface, and Jay-Z), ya think Jacko will continue his reign as the King of Pop—or is it time to pass the crown?** **9. Speaking of Jay-Z, rumor has it that his next album is gonna be way more "socially conscious," so does this mean the death of Jigginess as we know it?**

10. Doesn't Insane Clown Posse's album cover art look like a rip-off of Beavis and Butt-head? **11. As soon as they get their not-so-hot dance moves together, won't R&B trio Blaque be just as dope as TLC?** **12. After hearing "How to Rob," don't you think 50 Cents are banking too much on the idea that rappers have a good sense of humor?** **13. Since every other album of his has been dope for the past decade or so, shouldn't L.L. Cool J's upcoming joint be the hottest of the year?** **14. Although we love him to death, couldn't we go without hearing Busta's voice for, like, a good six months?** **15. Is BET ever gonna do a hot awards show like MTV?** **16. Speaking of BET, don't you find yourself missing Donnie Simpson coming down the eleva-**

20 QUESTIONS

tor on *Video Soul*, or the Mayor (Chris Thomas) sitting on *Rap City*'s park bench?

17. Are they gonna call the third installment of the *I Know What You Did Last Summer* series *I Know Even More About What You Did Last Summer*? **18. Can you imagine how much sexier Ricky Martin's dance moves are gonna be once he hooks up with Janet**

Jackson's brilliant choreographer Tina Landon? **19. We're crazy excited about Run-D.M.C.'s up-**

coming album featuring guest appearances by the likes of Aerosmith, Nas, Slick Rick, Method Man, and Sugar Ray, but weren't they first supposed to bless us with an old-school LP featuring hip hop's pioneers? **20. How crazy do you have to be to buy a new Mercedes-Benz S 600, when your homeboy's \$20,000 Toyota Camry looks almost exactly the same?**



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THE DETAILS

Cover Story: "Hail Mary"

cover: Red knee-length tube dress with draped effect \$320 by Plein Sud available at Plein Sud Boutique, N.Y.C., Saks Fifth Avenue, and Barney's stores nationwide; red sheared mink coat with fox collar \$12,000 by Guillaume Poupart of Ben Kahn Furs available at Neiman Marcus (inquire at Fur Salon); ruby cross, chain and leather belt \$1,200 by Salvatore Ferragamo.

page 29: Gray knee-length leather coat with middle zipper \$1,479 by Plein Sud available at Plein Sud Boutique, N.Y.C., Saks Fifth Avenue, and Barney's stores nationwide; black wool capri pants \$63 by Dolce & Gabbana available at Dolce & Gabbana stores; bra by La Perla; watch by Rolex.

page 163: Natural gold fox jacket \$6,000 by Guillaume Poupart of Ben Kahn Furs available at Stanley Korshak-Saks; silk leotard with leather shoulder sleeveless top with sequins \$4,340 and black wool capri pants \$63 both by Dolce & Gabbana available at Dolce & Gabbana store; jewelry and shoes, both by Gianni Versace; watch by Rolex.

page 185: Dark-brown belted goat's-fur coat \$4,790 by Gucci available at Gucci-New York, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Maxfields; black leather tube dress with lace trim \$75 by Plat Farm available at Plat Farm, N.Y.C.-Soho and Plat Farm, Miami-South Beach; jewelry by Gianni Versace.

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page 22: Black leather poncho by Tommy Hilfiger Collection available at Tommy Hilfiger Beverly Hills and Bond St.-London (for more information, please call 800-888-4802).

VIBEFashion: "Uptown Saturday Night"

page 219: Gray denim vest \$25 and gray patrol bib ski pants \$395, both by RLX Polo Sport (for more information, please call 800-433-8777) with top by Reebok; Suburbia by Chervy Truck.

page 220: Black leather vest \$250 and gray drawstring pants \$395, and white cotton tank top \$35, all Emporio Armani available at Emporio Armani stores nationwide (for more information, please call 877-EMPORIO).

page 221: Yellow belted bustier \$280 and burgundy fur micro-miniskirt \$1,860, both by Dolce & Gabbana available at Dolce & Gabbana New York Boutique-Soho and Houston Boutique; shoes by Yves Saint Laurent; bag by Paige Novick at Showroom Seven; brown long-sleeve sequined and embroidered T-shirt \$495, and black leather pants with black denim pants underneath \$800, and boots, all by Dolce & Gabbana available at Dolce & Gabbana, New York Boutique-Soho and Bal Harbour Boutique; visor by Kangol.

page 222: Black longhaired rabbit vest with Chinese goat lining \$250, black stretch ski pants \$70, white cotton V-neck T-shirt \$130, and boots, all by Gucci available at selected Gucci, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Barney's stores; watch by EBEL; black lambskin shearling vest with long zip front \$2,800 and black cashmere pants \$1,200 by Gucci available at Gucci (for more information, please go to [www.helmutdavid.com](#)); boots by Traxxas; watch by Tag Heuer; black leather coat with fur collar, black chain-mail tank with logo, black snowboard pants with fur, boots, and ring, all by Gianni Versace available at Versace Boutiques nationwide.

page 223: Black sheer evening dress with fur by Gianni Versace available at Versace Boutiques nationwide.

page 224: Black sleeveless, one-shoulder top \$348, black wood-paneled skirt \$1,200, black leather jacket with fur collar and belt \$1,464, all by Dolce & Gabbana available at Dolce & Gabbana, New York Boutique-Soho, Dolce & Gabbana-Bal Harbour Boutique, Doc & Gabbana-Houston Store, and selected Saks Fifth Avenue, Ultimo, Fred Segal, and Baugutti stores; boots by Giuseppe Zanotti Design; shoes by Nokia; charcoal ribbed halter top with turtleneck \$38, brown lace micro-miniskirt with light blue and green embroidery \$1,078, and boots, all by Dolce & Gabbana available at Dolce & Gabbana, New York Boutique-Soho, Dolce & Gabbana-Bal Harbour Boutique, and at Saks Fifth Avenue, Ultimo, and Fred Segal stores; fur bag by Patrick Robinson; diamond watch by Fendi.

page 225: Blue silk belted tube top and pale blue parachute pants both by Emporio Armani available at Emporio Armani store nationwide (for more information, please call 877-7-EMPORIO); shoes by Stuart Weitzman; bag by Paige Novick at Showroom Seven; watch by EBEL; black opaque vest with micro-fleece lining \$710, black gortex snowboard pants \$600, and black leather jacket \$1,200 by Gucci available at Gucci (for more information, please call 888-977-9900); watch by Tag Heuer; diamond stud earring by Fred Leighton; car by Mercedes-Benz, ML 430.

VIBEStyle: "Trick Daddy"

page 226: Black three-button suit \$495, white button-down shirt \$98, and black tie, all by DKNY available at selected Bloomingdale's and DKNY boutiques; hat by Mankins; watch by IWC; leather wristband by Jutta Neumann.

page 227: Gray wool long jacket \$752, gray wool-sheepskin pants \$2,200, and black leather belt \$1,200, all by G-STUML NATIONAL HOMME available at COSTUME NATIONAL, N.Y.C., Barney's-N.Y.C., and Beverly Hills, and Saks Fifth Avenue, San Francisco, Chicago, Houston, and Dallas; shoes by Donna Karan; sunglasses by Ray-Ban; gloves by Reebok.

page 228: Black wool three-button suit \$1,650 by Sandy Dalgado available at Saks Fifth Avenue, Barney's, and Louis, Boston stores nationwide; cream wide-brim cashmere sweater \$340 by Nova USA available at Nova USA-N.Y.C. (212-228-6844) and Fred Segal, L.A.; and black leather belt \$1,200 by Fred Segal.

page 229: Black single-breasted three-button suit \$795 and off-white silk shirt \$155, both by Cerruti available at Cerruti Boutique N.Y.C., Saks Fifth Avenue, and Beverly Hills; hat by Mankins; wristband by Shadi.

VIBEStyle: "Game Recognize Game"

page 230: (from left) Heelys; black twill-knit military crewneck shirt with nylon patches \$75 by Avirex available at The Cockpit-Soho; green and black plaid jacket \$1,200 by G-STUML NATIONAL HOMME available at COSTUME NATIONAL, N.Y.C.; Urban Outfitters; and (from right) black leather Player triple-threat vest \$1,200 by Timberland; black leather jacket \$157 by PNB available at Macy's East, Rich's-Atlanta, True-San Francisco, and Sid's Pants (for more information, please call 212-840-2223 or go to [www.pnbnation.com](#)); boots by Timberland; white tank top (three-pack) \$49 from the Loft available at white stores nationwide; khaki cargo pants \$68 by Triple 5 Soul available at Triple 5 Soul, 290 Lafayette Street, N.Y.C., Urban Outfitters, and (from right) black leather Player triple-threat vest \$1,200 by Timberland; black leather jacket \$157 by PNB available at Macy's East, Rich's-Atlanta, True-San Francisco, and Sid's Pants (for more information, please call 212-840-2223 or go to [www.pnbnation.com](#)); boots by Timberland; white tank top \$65, both by NY&Co. (not available) at all specialty athletic retailers nationwide (for more information, please call 888-357-AND1 or go to [www.and1.com](#)).

page 231: (from left) Black and red "flip mode" fleece jacket \$95 by Pura Playaz (for more information, please go to [www.puraplayaz.com](#) or e-mail [PuraPlayazNYC@aol.com](#)); cotton long-loose t-shirt \$22 by Envy available at Zero Trade Inc. (for more information, please call 800-483-6923); mammoth chenille sweater \$100 by Stacey L. Holman; (from right) black leather jacket \$1,200 by Timberland; black leather jacket \$1,200 by Avirex available at Macy's East, N.Y.C., and Up Against the Wall stores; denim jeans \$75 by PNB available at D.J.'s; sneakers by Nike; denim workers coveralls \$125 by FUBU available at Macy's; red wool-gray V-neck sweater \$74 by Sean Jean available at Macy's, The Ark, A.M.N. and Carson's stores; farm-boy jeans \$75 by PNB available at Footoder, The Kneez and Up Against the Wall; gray long-sleeve shirt \$58 by Nautica jeans available at The Bon Marché, Foley's, and Farouk Barron's; and (from right) cotton blend fleece cable-blocked wrap-up jacket with embossed logo \$500 by Avirex available at The Cockpit-Soho; black denim jeans \$75 by PNB available at Macy's East, Rich's-Atlanta, True-San Francisco, and Sid's Pants (for more information, please call 212-840-2223 or go to [www.pnbnation.com](#)); boots by Timberland; gray fleece button-up sleeveless shirt \$34 by Sean Jean available at Bloomingdale's and Belk stores nationwide; wool cargo pants (part of wool suit) \$360 by PNB available at Footoder stores nationwide; white t-shirt \$25 by PNB available at Footoder; black leather jacket \$1,200 by Timberland; black leather jacket \$1,200 by NY&Co. (not available) at all parent-thereshouses, all by Gucci available at select Gucci stores.

page 241: Black leather jacket \$1,800, black ribbed T-neck shirt \$75, olive wool cargo pants with red stripes \$475, and boots, all by John Bartlett available at selected Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's, and Nordstrom stores; sunglasses by Web; white sheer shirt \$350, red wool apron skirt \$875, and shoes, all by John Bartlett available at select Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's, and Nordstrom stores; luggage by Louis Vuitton; dog "Madison," courtesy of Marvet Britto.

page 236: Black hand-sewn top \$1,465, aqua hand-embroidered skirt \$6,595, and shoes, all by Tuleh available at Jeffrey-New York and Atlanta.

page 237: (from left) Black cashmere stretch top \$720 and black paper napkins shown wrapped in small satin \$15, both by Calvin Klein Collection available at Calvin Klein, Bergdorf Goodman, Neiman Marcus, and Saks Fifth Avenue; shoes by Fortuna Valentine; bag by Jamie Purcell; 1999 CZ convertible by Volvo.

page 240: Foundation leather halter dress \$2,440 and boots, both by Gacci available at Gucci-New York and Beverly Hills, and Neiman Marcus; black stretch cashmere one-button deconstructed blazer \$1,190, black stretch cashmere pants with contrasting waistband \$1,190, and black leather belt \$1,200 by John Bartlett; black leather jacket \$1,200 by Gucci.

page 241: Black leather jacket \$1,800, black ribbed T-neck shirt \$75, olive wool cargo pants with red stripes \$475, and boots, all by John Bartlett available at selected Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's, and Nordstrom stores; sunglasses by Web; white sheer shirt \$350, red wool apron skirt \$875, and shoes, all by John Bartlett available at select Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's, and Nordstrom stores; luggage by Louis Vuitton; dog "Madison," courtesy of Marvet Britto.

The Stylist: "Great Expectations"

All clothing in this portfolio by Polo Jeans Co. Ralph Lauren

page 244: Joe Hamersky: Fatigue bohoed sweater with orange nylon zip pocket \$98 and fatigue long-sleeve crewneck with contrast shoulder \$98, both available at Dillard's, Canal Jeans Co., and The Bon Marche stores nationwide; Stacey L. Holman: Green-to-pink down jacket \$1,75 and pink cashmere V-neck sweater \$220; Faile: Black leather jacket \$1,200 and black ribbed T-neck shirt \$75, both available at Dillard's and Up Against the Wall stores nationwide; each summit short sleeve T-shirt \$24 available at Lux Corp. and Robinsons stores nationwide; Lisa Collins: Dog jacket with fannel lining \$98 and blue cashmere V-neck sweater \$120; Malcolm Lee: Fatigue packable shirt \$88 available at Pacific Sunwear stores; Booker T. Mattison: Grey knit jeep hat \$24 and navy multi-scrunchcreators both \$28 available at Hecht's and Aetna stores nationwide.

page 245: (from left) Black classic cotton hooded sweater \$348, black ribbed T-neck shirt \$75, and black ribbed T-neck shirt \$75, both by Christopher & Banks available at Christopher & Banks stores nationwide; black leather belt \$120, wide-striped pants \$348, and black ribbed T-neck shirt \$75, both by Nike available at Nike-Town stores nationwide (for more information, please go to [www.nike.com](#)); boots by Timberland; blue suede jacket \$280 and pants \$220, both by Enyce available at Zane Ind.-Tech Inc. (for more information, please call 800-719-NORTHi); Doc Jay basic jeans \$52 by Mecca (for more information, please go to [www.meccausa.com](#)); boots by Timber-

land; black suede zip-front jersey \$130 by Willie Esco available at Macy's, Dr. Jays', The Buckle, and Foot Locker stores (for more information, please call 212-339-0585 or go to [www.willieesco.com](#)); white T-shirt \$24 by PNBA available at Macy's, East, Rich's-Atlanta, True-San Francisco, and Sid's Pants (for more information, please call 212-840-2223 or go to [www.pnbnation.com](#)); My World fleece pants \$53 and T-shirt \$24 available at specialty athletic retailers stores nationwide (for more information, please call 888-357-AND1); sneakers by Nike.

VIBEFashion: "Scandal!"

page 235: Ranch mink cape \$9,900 by Ben Kahn Furs available at Neiman Marcus stores nationwide (inquire at Fur Salon); black super-stretch jersey sleeveless mock-neck tunic \$600 by Calvin Klein Collection available at Calvin Klein, Bloomingdale's, and Dillard's; black leather belt \$120 by Gucci; black leather jacket \$1,200 (as miniskirt) \$42 by Calvin Klein Underwear available at Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Dayton Hudson stores nationwide; shoes by Fortuna Valentine; orange suede messenger bag by Lamberton's True; scarf and sunglasses, both by FEN DL.

page 236: Stone polyurethane coat with fur lining \$2,000, white cotton jersey tank top \$65, black leather classic biker pants \$1,270, and sunglasses, all by Helmut Lang (for more information, please go to [www.helmutlang.com](#)); black leather jacket \$1,200 and black ribbed wool and alpaca single-ply trouser \$797, both by Richard Tyler Couture available exclusively at the Richard Tyler Boutique-Los Angeles; shoes by Fortuna Valentine; bag by Lamberton's True; sunglasses by Bensons for Ford; watch by Cartier; ring by Fred Leighton.

page 238: Black hand-sewn top \$1,465, aqua hand-embroidered skirt \$6,595, and shoes, all by Tuleh available at Jeffrey-New York and Atlanta.

page 239: (from left) Black cashmere stretch top \$720 and black paper napkins shown wrapped in small satin \$15, both by Calvin Klein Collection available at Calvin Klein, Bergdorf Goodman, Neiman Marcus, and Saks Fifth Avenue; shoes by Fortuna Valentine; bag by Jamie Purcell; 1999 CZ convertible by Volvo.

page 240: Foundation leather halter dress \$2,440 and boots, both by Gacci available at Gucci-New York and Beverly Hills, and Neiman Marcus; black stretch cashmere one-button deconstructed blazer \$1,190, black stretch cashmere pants with contrasting waistband \$1,190, black leather belt \$1,200 by John Bartlett; black leather jacket \$1,200 by Gucci.

page 241: Black leather jacket \$1,800, black ribbed T-neck shirt \$75, olive wool cargo pants with red stripes \$475, and boots, all by John Bartlett available at selected Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's, and Nordstrom stores; sunglasses by Web; white sheer shirt \$350, red wool apron skirt \$875, and shoes, all by John Bartlett available at select Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's, and Nordstrom stores; luggage by Louis Vuitton; dog "Madison," courtesy of Marvet Britto.

(continued on page 284)

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THE DETAILS

(continued from page 282)

available at The Buckle and Dillard's stores; Dune Motorcross jeans \$78 available at Dillard's stores.

page 246: Eric Daniel: Fatigue camouflage back vest \$88 and Heather long-sleeve crewneck waffle ribbed top \$48, both available at Atium stores nationwide; Aura Johnson: Navy and olive ribbed sweater with hood \$88, Gina Prince-Bythewood: Orange thermal zipper mock-neck \$48; Jay Lowi: Light-blue long-sleeve hooded jersey with chest logo \$68 available at Carson Pirie Scott stores nationwide; Grace Quell: Denim work-wear jacket \$98; Rodney Charles: Heather zip-front cardigan \$135 available at Foley's stores nationwide.

page 247: (from left) Gina Prince-Bythewood: Natural long-sleeve Sinclair thermal \$42 and olive packable pants \$68; Jay Lowi: Blue Boy sweatshirt with double flap pockets \$68 and gray ribbed long-sleeve crewneck top \$48, both available at Parisian stores nationwide; fatigue packable zip pants \$78 available at Pacific Sunwear, Burdine's, and Famous Barr stores nationwide; Eric Daniel: Yellow fleece pullover \$78, navy short-sleeve T-shirt \$17; P.J. Carpenter pants \$24, and denim upholstered carpenter jeans \$78, all available at Dillard's stores; Aura Johnson: Fatigue Lindsay jacket with fake collar \$48, navy long-sleeve crewneck zip-neck \$42, and navy zip-up Anorak \$78; Grace Quell: Navy Elliot bootcut jeans \$42 and Zebra-print denim chinos \$42; Rodney Charles: White ribbed long-sleeve crewneck \$48 and navy tuck pants \$48. All clothes are available at Macy's and Bloomingdale's stores nationwide (unless otherwise specified); for more information, please call 888-POLO-JEANS or go to www.policolors.com.

Gear: "History"

page 248: 1. BeSound stereo system \$2,300 by Bang & Olufsen available at Bang & Olufsen store, N.Y.C.; 2. Grapelli Deluxe Hand and Body Lotion \$16, Hair Conditioner and Grooming Gel \$14, Baby Oil \$10, Baby Lotion \$10, Baby Shampoo \$10, Baby Oil and Close Shave \$10, Ultimate Brushless Shave Cream \$18, all by Kiehl's available at Kiehl's N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 212-677-3773); 3. Napa City travel case \$50 by Calvin Klein available at Calvin Klein stores; 4. Picture frame \$340 by Gucci available at Gucci stores nationwide; 5. 8800 Series cellular phone \$1,000 by Nokia available at Radio Shack (for more information, please call 800-348-3183); 6. Leather box \$78 by Coach available at Circuit stores nationwide; 7. Cassiopeia E-105 electric organizer \$599 by Casio available at Circuit City, CompUSA, Office Depot, and Staples stores nationwide (for more information, please call 800-962-2742); 8. Seamless boxer brief \$10 by Polo Ralph Lauren available at a Bloomingdale's store nationwide; 9. Cigarette case \$50 by Kenneth Cole available at Kenneth Cole stores nationwide; 10. Men's belt \$30 by Gucci available at stores nationwide; 11. Titanium Pocket Tech knife \$55 by Wenger Genuine Swiss Army Knives (for information, please call 800-267-3577); 12. Silver pocket key ring \$30 by CoSTUME NATIONAL available at CoSTUME NATIONAL-N.Y.C.; 13. Silver ring \$75 and cuffs links \$65, both by Kenneth Cole available at Kenneth Cole stores nationwide (for more information, please call 800-KENNETH-COLE or go to www kennethcole.com); 14. Playboy lighter \$24 by Zippo (for information, please go to www.playboystore.com); 15. Classical ballpoint pen \$450 and Platinum leather business card holder \$100, both by Montblanc available at Montblanc-N.Y.C.; 16. Gold watch \$1,000 by David Yurman available at David Yurman stores nationwide; 17. Gold watch \$1,000 by Kenneth Cole available at Macy's Wear and Bloomingdale's; 18. Perpetual calendar \$75 by Calvin Klein available at Calvin Klein stores nationwide; 19. 1999 SmartKey \$120 by Mercedes-Benz available at Mercedes-Benz dealerships nationwide; 20. Tie \$120 by Hermès available at Hermès N.Y.C. and Paris; 21. BOSS Hugo Boss fragrance \$40 by Hugo Boss available at Bloomingdale's, Macy's, and Saks Fifth Avenue stores nationwide; 22. Provence dresser \$3,280 by Grange available at ABC Gallery-Soho.

Sneak Peek: Equipment Tangent \$100 by Adidas (for more information, please call 800-345-7951).

VIBEface: "Glam Rap"

inside special insert: (from left) Mocha: Black denim rocker jean jacket \$88 and black sparkle bootcut jeans \$58, both by Tommy Jeans available at department stores nationwide; black camisole \$35 by Baby Phat available at Phat Farm, N.Y.C. and South Beach, Miami; shoes by Kenneth Cole; Trina: Black knit tube dress with knit arm sleeves \$375 by Plein Sud available at United-SoHo, Plein Sud Boutique-L.A., and Plein Sud Jeans Boutique-Miami; shoes by Patrick Cox; Red Dirge: Red, black, and white sequined miniskirt-and-top ensemble \$1,000 by Versus-Versace available at Versus-Versace nationwide and at selected Versace Boutiques; necklace by Orbez. Sole: Rust double-layer mini tube dress \$243 by Plein Sud available at United-SoHo, Plein Sud Boutique-L.A., and Plein Sud Jeans Boutique-Miami; Ever Taupé rabbit-fur shearing dress \$1,059 by CoSTUME NATIONAL available at COSTUME NATIONAL-N.Y.C., and Barney's N.Y.C. and Beverly Hills.

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V PROPS

The JVC RC-550

"Walkin' down the street / To the hardcore beat / While my JVC vibrates the concrete..."

—L.L. Cool J, 1985's "I Can't Live Without My Radio"

Introducing late summer 1978, the Japan Victor Corporation's Radio Cassette 550 is probably the most visually aggressive, pervasively iconic portable radio of the hip hop era: 15.7 pounds (minus its eight mandatory D-cell batteries) of pure ghetto bionics.

Oh yeah, the \$299.99 device had a 300-degree swivel microphone, FM/shortwave band radio tuner, and other gizmos. Chillin'. But to put it bluntly, the only reasons anybody I knew ever wanted one were pretty obvious: Its massive size—more than 19 inches wide, 14 inches high, and 6 inches deep—and most of all, its cyclopean 10-inch bass speaker. I mean, help me: If there has ever been a piece of technology more precisely aimed at masculine minors north of 110th Street, I fail to recall its existence.

The first time I ever saw a 550 for real, it was at a park jam, and someone had it up on the turntable deck. I remember covetously staring at its chrome fixtures and slide pots, its rack-mount handles, and that infinite woofer. The awestruck expression on my face was probably something like that of the stock hostage-drama explosives specialist, who, seconds after he's finally stumbled upon the last in a network of murderous bombs and, eying its elegant complexity, reverently intones that the elusive, detonator-loving villain is a "genius."

Bob Nizza, formerly a salesman for New York electronics chain Newmark & Lewis and currently JVC's East Coast branch sales manager, says, "I used to live to sell those things as a young guy." Speaking from the company's national headquarters in Wayne, N.J., Nizza, 43, remembers how "I would stack them floor to ceiling.... God, seven, eight feet high, six, seven rows across, and in a week or less they'd all be gone. The JVC RC-550 was the type of product that all you had to do was plug it in...and turn it on."

While the 550 eventually gave way to sportier, less cumbersome sound systems—it was discontinued in March 1981—the box remains so much a part of urban New York's visual memory that, as recently as 1997, an apparently pristine model briefly appeared in the music video for the remixed Beatnuts single "Off the Books." Meanwhile, I'm fantasizing about finding one in mint. Dream on, says Nizza, himself a collector. "I've never seen one for sale. A lot of those old dinosaurs, you just can't beat their sound."

Harry Allen

Rock Box:
the JVC
RC-550
(cassette,
plastic,
taped-on
pistol not
included)



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMEL SHABAZZ
1985, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

A woman with short, wavy hair is shown in profile, facing left. She is holding a lit cigarette in her right hand, which is raised to her mouth. A thin plume of smoke rises from the cigarette. The lighting is low, with a strong blue tint, creating a mysterious and sophisticated atmosphere.

MENTHOL AFTER DARK

BENSON & HEDGES MENTHOL

15 mg "tar," 1.1 mg nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method. © Philip Morris Inc. 1999

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Emphysema, Bronchitis, and May Complicate Pregnancy.



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